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The suburban middle class at risk: a profile of students who are referred to the office

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THE SUBURBAN MIDDLE CLASS AT RISK:

A PROFILE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE

REFERRED TO THE OFFICE

By
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ABSTRACT

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The Suburban Middle Class
At Risk: A Profile of Students
Who are Referred to the Office
May, 1999
Dr. Theodore Johnson
Educational Administration

The focus of this study was to identify the at risk students at a suburban high school based on the frequency of referrals to the office, and to determine why these students continue to misbehave. A list of students called down to the office was provided daily. Using the *Call Down List,* names of students who were referred to the office most frequently were compiled. A random sample of 23 students frequently on the list was used to develop a profile of the nature of the misbehavior, and the administrative action taken; patterns of attendance, lateness, and academic standing were also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with a teacher, two students from the sample, and a counselor. Major findings indicated that students repeat misbehaviors, miss instruction frequently, are not likely to be involved in school activities, and are academically in the lower track. Not only can these students least afford to miss instructional time to go to the office, but the measures taken do not prevent further cutting. Students that dropped out, or committed more serious infractions such as student on student violence, were on the *Call Down List* frequently. More focused early intervention and parental involvement was recommended.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to identify the at risk students in a suburban high school, and to recognize patterns of misbehavior which lead to office referrals for disciplinary action. Students frequently referred tend to be academic underachievers who do not participate in many school activities. Early intervention is recommended.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In every school, there will be some students who are considered *problem students*. They may be the disrupters of classes, the fighters in the lunchroom, the walkers in the hallway; or the bathroom smokers, the class cutters, the habitually late, the truant, the unmotivated, and the unprepared. These *problem students* are referred to the office when they get into trouble. They are sent to the office frequently throughout the year, and are sent often throughout their secondary school experience. These same students may be on the brink of failure, or actually be failing one subject, or more. Some perform below expected level in their basic skills, and others may admit to getting high on marijuana or beer. These students are the suburban at risk; they are the rule breakers, the ones that usually don't quite fit in, the ones that may not join in activities and events. The focus of this study is to examine who the at risk or *problem students* at Cinnaminson High School are, based on the frequency of referrals to the office. It also suggests why students who are sent to the office continue to misbehave. Finally, this study examines and recommends approaches that might be more successful deterrents to student at risk behavior, which results in office referrals, and in a greater potential for failure.

At risk is a label most often applied to students in urban, economically depressed school districts. When "A Nation At Risk" was first published in the early eighties, the at risk were those who were likely to fail. Discussions at that time were about the disparities between the rich and the poor school districts, with the impression being given

that there were no problems among the more advantaged students. Now, more than twenty years later, the disparities *are* much greater. Fewer than 50% urban poor high school students remain in school until graduation, while 80-90% of suburban middle class students do graduate. In the more advantaged districts, most go on to some kind of post-secondary school education or training, while in the urban poor districts, many will remain chronically unemployed, and untrained.

The tendency in suburban school districts is to put the greatest emphasis on the majority of students who are successfully progressing towards the goal of graduation, secure that these students will benefit from the traditional educational offerings. The successful student fits into established groups, and is supported and encouraged by teachers, counselors, and administrators. The successful student joins into mainstream activities, attends events regularly, participates in and volunteers for clubs and teams. They are active members and supporters of the learning community.

Unfortunately, there is a relative handful of students in suburban school districts that fail to benefit from the course offerings, and fail to thrive within the existing guidelines that are set to provide a positive learning climate. These students struggle through each day, often being placed in classes that label them as underachievers. These students expect to get into trouble, and get sent to the office. After a while, they seem to break rules at will, and take their punishment with little regret. They are the students who get into fights, cut classes, come to school late, and seem to lack the motivation or interest to achieve academic success. These students are considered disruptive, and not college bound. They rarely participate in extracurricular activities, and often have no plans for the future if they graduate. Many of this handful of *problem students* see

dropping out as a real alternative, claim to hate school, and often complain that classes are boring. Although their numbers are few, they consume a great deal of administrative time and energy. Referrals to the office increase as the year progresses, with the same students being seen by an administrator or a counselor as often as several times a week. Consequences for rule breaking seem to have little effect on preventing a repetition of misbehavior. According to Dr. Michael Zank, principal and the administrator most involved with discipline at Cinnaminson High School,

> "The same group of kids keep being referred to the office. They are the same ones in the hall during class time, they cut out of school after lunch, they are late to class, they get into trouble with their teachers, and they just seem to not care. The way we are handling things now is not doing them, or us, any good."
> (Interview, June 5, 1998)

The focus of this study was to examine who the at risk or *problem students* at Cinnaminson High School are, based on the frequency of referrals to the office. It is also to determine why students who are sent to the office continue to misbehave. Finally, this study examined and recommended approaches that might be more successful deterrents to student at -risk behavior, which results in office referrals, and in a greater potential for failure.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to develop a profile of students who have been sent to the office five or more times over a six month period. The related purpose of this study was to analyze the data in order to be able suggest the most appropriate and effective intervention approaches for use at the earliest possible point in a student's secondary school experience.

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Another purpose of this study was to improve the school climate. The application of effective behavior management strategies will enhance the overall performance of the school. Up to two administrators are currently spending two or more class periods each day in conference with students referred to the office. By analyzing the social, academic and behavioral profiles of *problem student*s at Cinnaminson's High School, and by implementing new strategies that will effectively reduce the number of students who are referred to the office for discipline, organizational change will occur. The roles of the Assistant Principals and Principal as disciplinarians will change, as will the roles of the teachers who write the referrals.

Among the alternative strategies suggested are peer mediation and conflict resolution techniques, mentoring by both in-school and community members, team building and leadership training programs, behavioral management programs, and the development of targeted programs for those identified as at risk.

Definitions

Throughout this study, the terms "at risk student" and *problem student* refer to students who misbehave frequently, and are referred to the office for administrative discipline five or more times within a six month period (March, 1998 through November, 1998). The misbehaviors can include chronic tardiness, class cutting, violating school parking rules, smoking in the bathrooms, possession or suspicion of drug or alcohol use, fighting, disruptive classroom behavior, insubordination, walking in the halls without a pass, using inappropriate language, wearing inappropriate clothing, and other violations of rules cited in the student handbook.

Following a written referral for misbehavior or rule infraction, an office conference is scheduled with the administrators handling discipline, and the student's name is placed on The *Call Down List* (see Appendix B). The *Call Down List* is a document distributed each day to all teachers. It contains lists of names of students who were referred to the office on the previous day, or who failed to report to either detention or Saturday School. The lists are grouped by the class period students are to report to the office for an administrative conference. Students are excused from class in order to report to the office for "call-down." The *Call Down List* was the source document used to identify the at risk students who are subjects of this study.

Administrative conferences are scheduled meetings between the misbehaving student and an administrator, most often the assistant principal. Generally, these conferences require the student to miss a class. Students may then be assigned to attend after-school detention sessions, Saturday School, or out of school suspension for a period of time which is determined by the frequency and severity of the infraction. Two or more periods per day are set aside for the administrative conferences. The administrator decides the consequence for misbehavior, and a note is sent to the referring teacher.

Saturday School refers to attending school on Saturday morning, with schoolwork to be completed. Suspension may be the result if students fail to attend Saturday School.

Prior to September 1998, a student could be referred to in-school suspension (ISS). A student did not attend regular classes, but reported to a room set aside for this purpose. Classroom teachers supplied work assignments to be completed, and the student was isolated from the general school population during lunch. In-school suspension was discontinued in September 1998. For more serious infractions, or for not attending

Saturday School, a student may be referred to Out of School Suspension (OSS) for up to

ten days. The student serves this time at home.

Limitations of the Study

The findings in this study are based on the examination of ninth, tenth, eleventh,

and twelfth grade students observed over a period of six months, between March of one

school year (1997-1998), and November of the following school year (1998-1999).

During that time, discipline procedures changed, and as of September 1998, students

were no longer sent to "in-school suspension." Saturday school has replaced "in-school

suspension," and it is difficult to measure accurately the effectiveness of either strategy

over the six months studied. While it seems that students did not mind in-school

suspension, and usually attended as assigned, Saturday School is avoided. Some students

may misbehave less frequently, but some are able to avoid Saturday School because of a

note from home verifying obligations, such as work commitments. It may be necessary

to study the success of Saturday School at the end of the current school year, after the

conclusion of this study.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not review student records prior to

high school. It is possible that there are some factors that exist at the middle school which

contribute to misbehavior at the high school. When this study reports on the profile of

students misbehaving, the indicators are those which are observed at the high school

only. There may be causes that arise prior to high school, but only manifest themselves in

misbehavior once the student enters high school.

Some strategies that are suggested by the results of this study may be long range

and system-wide, such as de-tracking, and cannot be implemented. Since the findings of

this study are limited by pre-set time constraints, generalization of the findings will not be possible. It will also not be possible to measure the success of programs implemented as a result of this study, since the project ends before the end of the school year. Some intervention programs as suggested by this study, such as mentoring, can not be implemented until September 1999, if at all.

<p style="text-align:center">Setting of the Study</p>

Cinnaminson Township is a small, suburban school district in southern New Jersey. The population is predominantly white (89%), with fewer than two percent of the township residents living in poverty. The median income for Cinnaminson residents is above $51,000. Eighty-one percent of the township's school age children are enrolled in the public school, and 99% percent of them do eventually graduate from high school (School District Data Book Profiles, 1998). Cinnaminson High School enrollment for 1998-1999 is about 750 students, approximately 200 of whom are seniors. In their junior year, twenty-six students were referred to the office more than eight times, and were among the subjects of this study through November of their senior year. Seventeen students who were referred to the office eight or more times in their sophomore year, were subjects examined in this study through November of their junior year. The last group to be studied were eighteen ninth graders who were referred to the office five or more times between March and June 1998, with study continuing through November of their sophomore year.

Significance of the Study

The misbehavior of an individual student in one class often causes a disruption in the learning activities of all students that are present. The teacher may have to stop instruction in order to deal with the problem. Time on task is reduced and, for students with attention difficulties, the distraction may mean an entire lesson is lost.

The misbehaving student who is then sent to the office also misses a great deal of instructional time. Misbehavior of students often results in suspension, loss of time in class, and lower grades. Cinnaminson High School's current practices of detention and suspension do little to prevent the repetition of the behavior that caused the action.

The data from this project suggests that there are in fact certain patterns of behavior that most often result in office referrals, and appropriate interventions can be introduced which would change those behaviors, the student may become less disruptive and more motivated to succeed. The current practice of suspension often reinforces the misbehavior by providing students with "a way of escaping situations that are aversive." By finding alternatives that are effective in dealing with the *problem student,* a more positive school climate will be maintained, and students, who are at risk of failure, can become successful learners and contributing members of the community.

Organization of the Study

Following a review of the literature described in Chapter 2, the next chapter will describe the research design used in this study. The research design will be described, and the research instruments will be specified. This will be followed by an examination of the subjects studied, and data collection approaches will be detailed. The evidence gathered will determine the intervention programs to be recommended for future implementation.

In Chapter 4, research results are presented, providing a description of the information collected, and furnishing an interpretation of the findings. Following this chapter, the next chapter describes the conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Since the early 1980's, when *A Nation At Risk* was first published (1983), there

has been almost continuous discussion about the at risk student. Indications of a student's

likelihood to have difficulty in school are often linked with socio-economic status, and

geography. The majority of literature found on the topics related to at risk

students generally report findings from studies conducted in poor, predominantly

minority, urban school districts (Cattarall, 1998; Squibb et.al. 1997; Kozol, 1991).

However, when poverty and geography are factored out, the term at risk also applies to

certain student behaviors such as chronic truancy, tardiness, class cutting,

underachievement, disruptiveness, running away, alcohol or drug abuse, unemployment,

delinquency, and a lack of motivation to do well in school (Richardson & Colder,

Goodlad & Keating, 1994). In addition, students with social disadvantages, such as those

from homes with a single parent, or those with dropout models within the family may

also be considered at risk(Goodlad, 1994).

In a suburban, majority white, middle class school district, the number of students

labeled as at risk is relatively small, often with 99% graduating from high school, as

opposed to less than 50% graduating high school in urban poor districts (School District

Data Book Profiles, 1998). Because the number of at risk students is small, districts may

not make any attempts to change the way the problem student is treated. Ironically, some

researchers indicate that approaches traditionally used can actually "increase the

likelihood of disruptive and undesirable behavior" (Shore, Gunter & Jack, 1993; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997). Despite the small numbers, the 1% of students not graduating, along with those who are chronic *problem students* are no less important to their family, friends and community than their non-problem classmates, and their needs should be addressed (Sizer, 1996).

Researchers and supporters of school reform also look beyond the otherwise low failure rate in most suburban, middle class schools. In <u>Schools That Work</u>, George Wood (1992) states that "the task of public education, the education of democratic citizens, is most at risk in our schools," and that schools are not promoting values such as a sense of justice, equality, and compromise. The education that most students receive is considered by some to be average, or mediocre. Students who are considered "problem students" and at risk may be placed in the "lower track classes," because they "just don't get it." According to Theodore Sizer, "Every body has to get it. ... The stakes are high, not only for the individual student [the 1% who drop out of suburban middle class schools], but also for the rest of us, who will have to support citizens who cannot hack it in a complex economy and society" (1996). According to Oakes and Lipton, studies conclude that tracking leads low-track children to school misbehavior (in Goodlad and Keating, 1994).

The practice of sending students who misbehave to the office is a common one. It is the traditional policy used to deal with disruptive students. It is also common to refer students who are tardy, truant, aggressive, defiant, and disrespectful (Skiba et.al. 1997). In some school districts, only discipline problems that can not be resolved between the student and the teacher are referred to the office for intervention by an administrator (<u>Camden Board of Education Discipline Manual,</u> 1996). In Cinnaminson Township's

schools, the student may get referred to a counselor first, and then the office; however, in both Camden and Cinnaminson, it is the teacher who usually originates the office referral.

The definition of at risk being used in this study is related to student behaviors and the resulting office referrals, rather than socio-economic status and urban location. In order to understand the problem as it exists in a middle class suburban high school, it is necessary to examine the misbehaviors being reported, as well as to determine possible causes.

Behaviors that are the focus of studies in both urban and suburban schools, and which most certainly lead to disciplinary referrals include: acts of aggression or violence; substance abuse which includes tobacco, drug, and alcohol use; racial conflict; acts of vandalism, and any other behaviors that threaten the health and safety of students in a learning environment. In addition, behaviors that impact on the success of individual students, such as class cutting, chronic lateness, or frequent absence, also result in office referrals, higher potential for failure or dropping out. (Skiba et al., 1997; Nagel, McDougall & Granby, 1996; Chandler, Chapman, Rand, & Taylor, 1998; Kerrins & Hayes, 1996; Friedman, Glickman & Utada, 1985; Garnier, Stein& Jacobs, 1997).

Several studies have been conducted which examine the causes of misbehavior. Dodge (1997) describes a "multiple risk factor model ...that includes biological dispositions, ecological context, family processes, peer influences, academic performance, and social information processing patterns." These factors, when they interact, lead to "chronic conduct problems." Other studies have been conducted into the

reasons why students misbehave (Roeser, et.al. 1992; Vispoel & Austin, 1996; Kerrin & Hayes, 1996; Dodge, 1996), and are referred to the office (Skiba, et. al., 1997).

Roeser, Midgley, & Urden (1996) examined the quality of student-teacher relationships and how behavior is effected. "Students who perceived their school as emphasizing effort, and personal development also perceived that teachers cared about, trusted and respected [them]." These students tended to have a greater sense of belonging, and had higher academic achievement. On the other hand, when students perceived schools and teachers as less responsive and supportive, or punitive, there is a lowered sense of belonging. They concluded that students who are not being recognized for superior performance, such as being on the honor roll, are unable to feel a sense of success and belonging, and are more likely to misbehave.

When studies were conducted in urban districts, students who perceived schools as non-supportive, were also more likely to drop out (1998, Catterall). Sinclair and Ghory (1994, in Goodlad and Keating) describe students who experience strained relationships with the educational environment as "marginal," and may lead others to view their behavior as deviant. In time, irritation with the student is expressed, and teachers regularly question the student's behavior. The student becomes known as a troublemaker, and formal action may be taken which "stigmatizes" the student. Other variables studied as causes of at risk or problem behavior include: race, ethnicity, and language; family background and support; academic achievement; attitudes, motivation and self-concept; level of involvement in school activities; and involvement with gangs, drugs, tobacco, and alcohol (Cattarall, 1998; Roeser, Midgely, Urdan, 1996; Friedman. Glickman, & Utada, 1985). Skiba, et.al. (1996) concluded that low socioeconomic status, minority,

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and special education students are at greater risk of receiving harsh discipline, and other studies have pointed out that "bias due to race, gender, and handicapping conditions" may result in a wide range of disciplinary actions (Panko-Stilmock, 1996; and Cooley, 1995 in Skiba, et. al., 1996).

Once a referral to the office is made, the response to the incident can vary, and is usually dependent upon the severity of the misbehavior. *Section E of* the *Cinnaminson Township School Staff Manual* (1998), delineates school policy, rules and regulations, and recommends procedures to be taken when students misbehave. The policies and procedures have been changed from the previous year, because they were determined to be ineffective deterrents to repetition of the offending behavior. Prior to 1998 in Cinnaminson High School, most infractions of the school rules resulted in in-school suspension, or out of school suspension. The current manual describes twenty-three infractions, with before and after school detention, Saturday detention, and out of school suspension as the recommended actions to be taken. "Parent conference and notification will occur only after major or recurring disciplinary actions."

Although research regarding discipline procedures used in suburban middle class schools is limited, studies which related to behaviors, and the schools' response to rule infractions were similar in all populations. Suspension was reported to be the most frequently used form of discipline. For example, the Skiba, Peterson, and Williams study (1997) looked at office referrals, and disciplinary intervention. They described discipline procedures that were followed in two large middle schools. Another study done with middle school students examined the responses to student tardiness (Kerrins & Hayes, 1996) found that a consequence for being late for class is, "in some cases, being

suspended for not following the rules and showing up on time." Suspension "appears to be correlated with an increased risk [for] dropping out (Skiba, et. Al., 1996)." Other behaviors that resulted in suspension include "disrespect, defiance, noncompliance, and general school disruption"(Imich, 1994 in Skiba, et.al. 1997). Until September 1998, suspension (in-school and out-of-school suspension) was also the most frequent response to referrals to the office at Cinnaminson High School.

If suspension, and other common disciplinary responses to students who misbehave and are sent to the office do not deter the undesirable behavior, then what are successful strategies to use with suburban, at-risk students who are sent to the office?

- Parental Involvement: Since parents are the students' first teachers, and family is the child's first social structure, parents are part of the learning community. If the home is permissive, or lacks structure and discipline, then students tend to have lower self-esteem, and more likely to misbehave. Students from homes where high standards of behavior were demanded, and rules were consistently enforced with rewards rather than punishment, school behavior was better (Glasser, 1969).

   James Comer developed a model for schools in predominantly poor, urban school districts that addressed the needs of students who were less successful in school. While Comer, in part, attributed the lack of success to social and economic circumstances, some of the behaviors that resulted are also seen in middle class, at risk students. In the Comer method, parents play a very active role in the education of their children, and are part of the management team, along with the principal and teachers. This team then works "together to

identify problems and decides how they should be corrected." Parental involvement was found to be key to student success. (Evans, 1992).

Some school districts, such as in Camden and Lenape Regional High School Districts, offer workshops for parents on behavior management techniques. (Garnier, Stein & Jacobs, 1997). Kerrins & Hayes (1996) reported that student tardiness can be prevented when parents and students are "involved in and informed of school policies and procedures."

- Group Counseling: When students are identified as being at risk, school psychologists or school social workers engage them in group counseling situations (Ingoldsby, 1998). The support provided, and the topics explored, often result in re-establishing the "connectedness" and "sense of belonging" deemed necessary for school success (Roeser, Midgley & Urdan, 1996; Sinclair and Ghory, also Richardson and Colfer in Goodlad & Keating, 1994). Topics discussed may include goal setting, decision-making, and values clarification; in addition, more serious topics, such as substance abuse, A.I.D.S., family relationships, and other "adolescent issues" are topics that can be discussed in group sessions with a trained counselor.

- Conflict Resolution: Over the past year or two, there has been a marked increase in the number and severity of aggressive and violent incidents that occur in school. Popular media, such as newspapers, magazines, and television, have reported several incidents that resulted in serious injury and even death (Dowling, 1998; Embry, 1997; Chandler, et.al. 1998). Goleman (1994) recommends preventive programs that target emotions, because "emotional

deficits contribute to risk." He continues to say that, "interventions that are designed to target the specific deficits in emotional and social skills that undergird ...aggression" can be highly effective. Students learn that "the point is not to avoid conflict," but to resolve disagreements before they escalate into fights.

There are many programs and curricula commercially available which address conflict resolution, and violence prevention (Schrumpf, Crawford, & Usadel, 1991; Adreano & Greenwald, 1988; Baselice, et. al., 1996; NJ State Bar Foundation, 1998). Some programs are designed for implementation by counselors, to be used outside of the regular classroom and for students who have been identified as needing intervention of this sort due to their history of misbehavior. This may result in further separation of the at risk student from the mainstream, and discourage more acceptable behavior (Sinclair & Ghory in Goodlad & Keating, 1994; Embry, 1997). Most literature indicates that conflict resolution techniques are valuable for all students, and the teacher, not just the counselor, is the group leader. Wood (1993) sees the classroom as a community where problems are solved. Classroom meetings are held that address discipline problems, and the teacher is the meeting leader.

Goleman (1997) describes the "Self Science Curriculum" as a way to manage emotions, "realizing what is behind a feeling (such as hurt that triggers anger), and learning ways to handle anger." The students sit in a typical circle, and the teacher delivers the lessons in "emotional literacy." The topics discussed are part of everyday school life, and not just reserved for those

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"occasional disciplinary trips to the principal's office." Glasser (1969)

suggests the homeroom can be used for "social-problem-solving" meetings

where conflicts can be resolved in a less impersonal way.

Another approach is called the "PeaceBuilders Model". A climate of

change and resiliency is created, "so the school is a peaceful, nurturing

environment that promotes thinking, emotional and relationship

competencies"(Embry, 1997). The program involves training for everyone in

the school community (teachers, administrators, parents, students, police and

other community authorities), and "uses a common language to reduce

violence and aggression, and enhance feelings of belonging and safety

(Embry, 1997)."

- Staff Training: Since it is the teacher that most often must confront

  misbehavior which occurs in the classroom, then they need to be trained to

  deal with the misbehavior more effectively. In the late 1960's when social

  and political unrest caused frequent conflicts in and out of school, models

  were developed to assist teachers with behavioral management and conflict

  resolution (Chesler & BenDor, 1968). Likewise, in the late 1990's, the

  number of violent acts committed by students in school became more

  frequent (Kauffman & Burbich, 1997). Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager & Camilli

  (1997) reported that staff members need to "sharpen their skills in problem

  identification and intervention techniques," and that "camaraderie among the

  staff develops, and everyone learns to work together to change the climate of

  the school."

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- Peer Mediation: Just as parents have a role to play in the educational success of their children, the peer group relationships and influences that effect the success or failure of adolescents cannot be overlooked. On the negative side, some dropouts gave not being able to get along with other students, and having friends who dropped out as reasons for dropping out. "An overall characterization of dropping out is that students leave because of nonsuccess and alienation in school" (Cattarall, 1998).

When a conflict arises in school, "teachers may at first respond by advising those involved to ignore it"… and "students may respond by encouragement to get 'em back" (Schrumpf, Crawford & Usadel, 1991). Friends and acquaintances of students involved in the conflict take sides, and may provoke further hostility. Conflicts can become " contests where there must be a winner and a loser."

Peer mediation is an approach used to defuse conflicts among students before they escalate into fights, or greater degrees of violence. It is a "method for negotiating disputes…It is a way for students to deal with differences without coercion" (Schrumpf, Crawford & Usadel, 1996). Peer mediation is voluntary, and students choose to work with mediators (New Jersey State Bar Foundation, 1998). Student mediators are trained, and generally work in teams of two. After the mediators listen to, and review the facts, a contract is drawn up to which the disputants agree, or further disciplinary action will need to be taken (Peer Mediation History, 1998).

- Mentor Programs: Mentoring is another strategy that has been found to benefit at risk students. Mentoring is a supportive, caring, and consistent relationship between a student and an adult which is intended to "strengthen character, promote social change, ... and create opportunities for personal empowerment" (White-Hood, 1991; Styles and Morrow, 1992). Other outcomes of mentoring include: improved self-esteem, greater exposure to cultural, social, recreational, and employment opportunities, improved academic performance, and reduced anti-social behavior (Tierney and Branch, 1992).

> A mentor is someone who offers support, guidance and concrete assistance as the younger partner goes through a difficult period, · enters a new area of experience, takes on important tasks, or corrects an earlier problem. (Crockett and Smink, 1991)

Many mentor programs, such as Temple University's Linking Lifetimes initiative, are targeted to students who are in danger of dropping out, are academically struggling, or exhibit problem behavior (White-Hood, 1991; Styles and Morrow, 1992; Crockett and Smink, 1991; Powers and McConner, 1997). Some programs are made available to any student who would benefit from extra adult attention, and wanted it, such as shy students, gifted students, as well as students with attendance problems (White-Hood, 1991).

Some high school mentoring programs paired up teachers, and other school staff from administrators to lunchroom aides, with students who were identified by teachers as at risk. Teachers were paired with students who were not in their class in order to avoid the perception of favoritism. Mentors are also drawn from the larger community: from businesses and corporations,

from colleges and universities, or from community leaders and elders. The mentor is a volunteer who wants to help make a difference in a young person's life (White-Hood, 1991; Christensen, 1996; Styles and Morrow, 1992; &Tierney and Branch, 1992). "By portraying themselves as individuals 'living up' to role expectations, mentors help students grow" (White-Hood, 1991).

An effective mentor-student relationship is difficult to define, and is idiosyncratic. The district/school culture that surrounds the mentor program has a significant influence on the relationship (Powers and McConner, 1997; Styles and Morrow, 1992; & Flaxman, 1992). Most mentoring programs require some kind of training. Based on mentoring research, the following are considered necessary traits of an effective mentor: collaboration, enthusiasm, emotional commitment, and sensitivity (Powers and McConner, 1997). Two indicators of a satisfactory mentor relationship are described in Styles and Morrow (1992) as:

1. Feelings of liking, attachment to, and commonality with the partner.

2. Commitment to the relationship, expressed as a desire to continue it.

"Mentors bring to the relationship their own intuitive styles of relating to youth"(Flaxman, 1992). They have to be able to understand and communicate with youth and be able to establish mutual trust. Both partners have to recognize boundaries, and respect privacy (Tierney and Branch, 1992; Powers and McConner, 1997; Crockett and Smink,1991).

In some mentoring projects, parents were active participants, while in others, parents just simply gave consent. In Project Soar, "Parents, students, and mentors participated in a series of five interactive, motivational and informational workshops with topics directed towards success, and staying in school"(Powers and McConner, 1997). Not all mentoring is successful; both mentors and protégé do drop out. Several studies have been reported which delineate success factors and analyze failures of mentoring programs (Powers and McConner, 1997; Crockett and Smink, 1991; Flaxman, 1992, July; Flaxman, 1992, June; & Tierney and Branch, 1992).

- Detracking and School Reform: While it is beyond the scope of this study to consider detracking as a possible solution to at risk behavior, a dialogue with community members on new ideas in education would be appropriate. Districts that involve all members of the learning community in the decision making process, are also very successful. As an example, the Mount Laurel School District has been involved in on-going strategic planning, is receiving very high marks academically, yet has one of the lowest per pupil expenditures in the state (NJ Department of Education, 1996-1997). Many reforms are cost effective, as well as educationally sound (Evans, 1992; Goodlad and Keating, 1994; Glasser, 1969; Sizer, 1996; & Gardner, 1991).

Summary

There is evidence that behavior, and not simply socio-economic status, determines future success for students. When behavior determines the attitude teachers have towards students, when behavior affects academic placement, status, and support received, and when behavior becomes unacceptable to the learning community and tends to isolate individual students, then steps must be taken to change the behavior of the problem students. In suburban, middle class districts, the problems causing misbehavior are varied, and so should the solutions to the problems be varied.

The research suggests several possible ways to intervene and prevent future misbehavior, once the profile of the problem student has been identified. There appears to be no one "quick-fix" for students sent to the office. It is likewise evident in the literature that many of the interventions, which have proven successful in dissimilar populations, would probably also be successful in Cinnaminson, and are feasible. For example, the research indicates that a student who is chronically tardy should be involved in some sort of program that also includes parent participation; this can be supported by the existing Home and School Association. A peer-mediation program, which can defuse the less serious conflicts that occur, is a reasonable and low cost approach to conflict resolution; this program can be lead by the crisis counselors who are already on staff. A mentoring program can be implemented which pairs every at risk student with an appropriate mentor match based on interests and needs; the new, non-profit Cinnaminson Education Foundation can help link the at risk students with community mentors. Since the number of at risk students is so small in Cinnaminson, it may be possible to develop individualized behavior plans, based on each student's needs, and on the research.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Description of the Research Design

Using qualitative and descriptive research methods, steps were taken to identify

the individual students who were referred to the office for administrative handling. Each

morning at Cinnaminson High School, a form is distributed to each teacher which lists

the names of students scheduled to see a disciplinary administrator for that day. This

document is known as the *Call Down List*. The *Call Down Lists* were collected for six

months, from March 1, 1998 through December 21, 1998. These were the source

documents used to determine frequency of referrals by student and grade.

At first, all students on the daily the *Call Down Lists* were grouped by grade level,

using the March through June lists; then the September to December lists were reviewed.

The total lists divided by grade were then examined, and the students who were referred

most often were identified. Clerical staff in the main office maintained all files related to

the *Call Down Lists*, including student referral folders, all original referral slips, and

outcome of administrative conferences.

The next step in the process involved an examination of the referral folders of the

students most frequently seen by administrators for misbehavior of any kind during the

time period specified by this study. The records were cumulative, from the time the

student first entered Cinnaminson High School to the present. The documentation

included the date of each referral, the reason for the referral or the specific rule infraction,

and the decision made by the administrator regarding consequences. The clerical staff, in consultation with the disciplinary administrators, was also responsible for all conference scheduling. All scheduling and recording of information related to disciplinary referrals were done by hand. Although computers were used for many other administrative functions including scheduling and grades, there was no database on the school's network that was used to record disciplinary referrals.

Specific school and district policies regarding issues related to discipline, lateness, and attendance were also examined. Some changes in the school's disciplinary policy occurred between June, 1998 and September 1998. Attendance policy was also changed in September, and attendance data was examined, since truancy, tardiness, and class cutting are also indicators of at risk behavior. Unlike the discipline files, attendance files were kept on a database, and the information needed was readily available. Information on students who had stopped attending, but were also on *the Call Down Lists* from March 1998 through December 1998 was also obtained. A comparison was made of the students who were most frequently called to the office and those that were also excessively tardy or absent. It was less clear whether students who were referred to the office also signed out of school early with any frequency.

Although information regarding student academic status was requested, the academic records of students frequently referred to the office were not available to this researcher, since it was felt that such information must remain confidential. However, since many of the students frequently referred to the office were students enrolled in non-college prep and BSIP English classes taught by this researcher, information used as a

means to determine the students' general academic standing, and level of participation in school activities was obtained through individual conference.

Another area looked at was the number of students who appeared on the *Call Down Lists* between March and December, and who were no longer registered at Cinnaminson High School because they dropped out, or voluntarily transferred to an adult high school program. Once the student was signed out of school, or graduated, there was no follow-up done. Some students who reported they would attend another school, such as one of the area evening schools, did not actually do so. Therefore, school records may describe students as having transferred, yet in reality they have dropped out. While at first there seemed to be a relationship between those who were referred to the office and those who dropped out, insufficient data was available to examine this factor. An area for investigation in a future study might be to answer questions related to post high school activities of students who were frequently referred to the office.

In addition to the data collection already described, two students most frequently on the list from different grade levels, a veteran teacher, and a counselor were selected for semi-structured interviews. This was done to determine from various points of view why some students were referred to the office so frequently, and why the policies and procedures in place do not deter students from repeating misbehaviors. Due to scheduling constraints, the number of those interviewed was relatively small; nevertheless, it was felt that the insight provided by those interviewed was of value and the responses were included with other findings.

Development of the Research Instruments, Selection of Participants, and the Data Collection Approach

Once the *Call Down Lists* were collected, analysis was done using several methods. First, a database was created to record the information. Next, call-down lists were collected, from March through December 21, 1998. Names were grouped by grade level, looking at students who were in the ninth, tenth, or eleventh grades in March 1998 and also at those entering the ninth grade in September. Dates of each appearance on the *Call Down List* were recorded. Using number of occurrences, a list of the most frequent entries was established for each grade level. Students who dropped out, transferred out, or graduated were not included on the list. The remaining top names (five to eight or more times) on each list were then entered into the database.

Using the data available, percentages were calculated comparing grade levels and the total population, and examining such variables as number of times on the list, number of times absent, and number of times late. The lists of ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students who were both frequently on the *Call Down List* from March to June, and who were also recorded as frequently absent or tardy Attendance Department lists September through November, 1998 were examined. The names of students appearing on both the Attendance Lists and the *Call Down Lists* were then compared.

The next step was to select participants for further study. Twenty-one students were randomly selected from the lists of those most frequently on the *Call Down List*. The criteria for selection included: Is the student still enrolled? Has the student appeared frequently on both the March to June list, and the September to December list? Has the student appeared on the list at least a total of ten times? Of the entering freshmen, who were most frequently on the list?

Once the study group was established, it was necessary to carefully review the disciplinary records in the office for each of the participants. The discipline records for all the participants were then pulled. The date of infraction, the type of infraction, and the action taken by the administrator were recorded and entered into the database. A table was generated which listed the number of each type of infraction, and for each action taken for each student. Notations were made which indicated whether or not a parent conference took place. The office staff also provided forms that were sent home to parents whenever a detention or a Saturday School was assigned.

After that, other variables were considered, including whether or not students were either classified or in lower track classes, and whether students were members of any teams or clubs. The collection of this information was done informally, and will be considered only in the broader description of at risk students in a suburban setting.

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed to determine any patterns. The variables examined were number of times on list, type of infraction, and the action taken. Another variable examined was to determine if the student actually went to detention or Saturday School. Whether a student who cuts class, is tardy, or is frequently absent will attend detention or Saturday School, became an additional sub-question. The tables were developed from the data (see Tables 1,2,and 3).

The final step in development of the research instruments was to create interview questions to use with representatives from the entire learning community, including students, teachers, counselors, administrators, police officers, and parents who might be considered stakeholders concerned about the students who misbehave. Since scheduling interviews was constrained by the researcher's teaching responsibilities, the number

participating in the interview process was small. However, the information can be considered valuable because the responses reflect different points of view. While these responses cannot be considered statistically important, they are interesting and provide insight for future studies.

The Data Analysis Plan

The data of greatest interest answers the questions, "Which students are sent to the office most frequently? Why are the same students on the *Call Down List* so often? What are the reasons that the same students repeat their misbehavior, and are not concerned about the consequences? What can be done to prevent behaviors which lead to referrals?" By comparing the numbers of students referred to the office by grade level, the grade where the most students appear on the list with the greatest frequency were determined. Based on the results, it was possible to recommend when intervention should take place.

The data was also used to identify which infractions occur most frequently. By reviewing the numbers obtained from the sample group, it was reasonable to suggest specific measures designed to modify behavior and prevent the infractions from reoccurring. In some cases, policies may have to be changed, additional staff training may have to be provided, or parents may have to be included in disciplinary decisions.

Interview responses were carefully recorded, since the information provided is from individuals who have the greatest interest in addressing the issues of the at risk students, yet are not usually included in the problem solving process. While there have been committees formed which were responsible for discipline issues, there is rarely opportunity to obtain input from the students who are most frequently perceived as the discipline problems. Responses from the professionals who actually have to deal with the

students who are most frequently in the office were based on actual experiences, and on personal knowledge about the problem. The resulting data, when combined with such insight into the nature of the problem, will suggest a framework for new policies and strategies designed to limit the number of students who are referred to the office.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

The total population studied included all students referred to the office who were freshmen (A Group), sophomores (B Group), and juniors (C Group) in March 1998. Also included were students who were incoming freshmen (D Group), as well as A, B, and C Groups who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors in September 1998. All students in this study were on the *Call Down List* at least once. The size of the student body minus those that were seniors in March 1998 was approximately 530. Of those students, 210 or 40% were on the *Call Down List* at least once. There were 212 students on the *Call Down List* between September 16, and December 21, 1998, excluding the new freshmen.

Of the students that were on the *Call Down Lists* between March 1, 1998 and December 21, 1998, approximately two-thirds were on the list more than once, and one third of the students were on the list five times or more. There were fewer freshmen on the lists between September and December than were on the list between March and June. At first glance, it appeared that there might have been some improvement that could have been attributed to factors not examined by this study, such as the discipline policy changes. However, it is also possible that the new freshmen had to get accustomed to the routines at the high school, and by March to June 1999 they would be on the *Call Down List* with increased frequency. The group with the fewest students on the *Call Down List* from September to December was the A Group, and there was a decrease in the number of those students on the list in December when compared with June's list. A Group had

eighteen students who were on the list five times or more between March and June, but only eight students were on the list five or more times September to December. Thirteen A Group students were on both the June and December lists, three students dropped out, and one student was on the list in December, but not on the list in June.

B Group students also showed a slight decrease in the total number referred to the office between June and December. Twenty-eight students were on the *Call Down List* five or more times in June, and twenty-four students were on the list five or more times in December. Five of the students from the June list either dropped out or transferred out. Almost 20% of those referred from the B Group were on the *Call Down List* more than eight times, and nine students were on the list more than twenty times. By December, one student was on the list a total of forty-two times.

Group C students, seniors in September, had the same number of students on the *Call Down List* in June and December. Almost one half of the seventy-four students listed were referred more than four times by June, and almost one fourth were called to the office more than ten times in the same time period. By December, thirty Group C seniors had been on the *Call Down List* more than eight times, two transferred to other schools and five dropped out. Nine students were on the *Call Down List* twenty or more times and three students were on the list more than thirty times.

There were thirty-two Group D students, the new freshmen, referred to the office by December 21,1998. Only seven of these students were on the *Call Down List* more than four times. One student had been retained in ninth grade, and had subsequently dropped out. Whether or not the number of freshmen that make the *List* remains small is unknown. It appears, however, that students who are frequently on the *Call Down List*

continue to misbehave or commit infractions, and that the behavior which leads to referral continues, despite current policies and practices (see Table 1).

Students on the *Call Down List* on any given day report to the administrator indicated, at the time indicated (see Appendix B). Most students must report to the office during first, second, or third period. One or two assistant principals are responsible for meeting with the students. Students who commit several infractions, or fail to report to an assigned detention, may be pulled out of the same class several times a month. Each administrator spends one to two hours each day meeting with these students. Considering the number of students (210-212) being sent to the office, some as many as twenty or thirty times and as few as once, that is a lot of instructional time missed, and a lot of administrative time devoted to a process that does not appear to change student behavior for the better.

Table 1

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ON THE *CALL DOWN* LIST

	MARCH 1, TO JUNE 21			SEPT. 16, TO DEC. 21		
STUDENTS	TOTAL # STUDENTS	5-10 TIMES	10 + TIMES	TOTAL	5-10 TIMES	10+ TIMES
A Group	54	16	2	49	4	2
B Group	82	20	8	79	8	16
C Group	74	23	18	74	16	14
D Group	*	*	*	32	6	1

A Group = Freshmen in March who became sophomores in September.

B Group = Sophomores in March who became juniors in September.

C Group = Juniors in March who became seniors in September.

D Group = Freshmen in September, no record available for March.

A comparison was made between the students who were on the *Call Down Lists* and those students who were in jeopardy of losing credit due to absences or latenesses. Of the 49 students listed on the attendance report, 50% or 25 students were also among those frequently called to the office. There were 29 student who were late at least 11 times from September 3, 1998 to November 30, 1998. Thirteen students, or 45%, were on the lateness list and also on the *Call Down Lists*. Once again, for this group of students, it is instructional time missed. If these same students were demonstrating a pattern of attendance that also existed previously, then over the years, the amount of time lost may have been very large. This is also an area that can be looked at in a future correlational study that examines academic achievement, behavior, and attendance.

The next variables examined were whether or not students were also in low track classes, and whether or not they were active in any school activities. Of the 16 students on C Group's list of most frequent visitors to the office (8 times or more) between September and December:

- 13 were also in BSIP or low track classes,
- 4 were classified,
- 3 students participated in school activities such as clubs or sports,
- 3 have since dropped out.

Of the 18 students on B Group's list of most frequent visitors to the office between September and December:

- 13 were also in BSIP or low track classes,
- 6 were classified,
- 2 participated in sports or after school activities,

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- 1 was assigned to home instruction following incident of school violence,

- 1 had dropped out.

The researcher was unable to obtain information regarding GROUPS A and D.

This data appeared to indicate a possibility that students who are on the list most frequently are likely to also be academically challenged. They may also be least prepared to enter the adult world, since few will go on to college. Few students on the list were also motivated to join clubs, teams, and other activities. If this project were to be continued and further research conducted, a long-range follow-up study of students who graduate or leave Cinnaminson could be undertaken to determine post high school activities. Is there a relationship between students on the *Call Down List* and their accomplishments after leaving high school?

The final information obtained was through the interviews. The transcripts from a student interview, a teacher interview, and a counselor interview follow:

STUDENT BA (see Table 2)

Q: *Why are you on the Call Down List so often?*

A: I am called down for stupid stuff, things I don't think I'll get in trouble for. It doesn't matter because you can plea your case and get charges dropped. If you cut class, or you get misuse of pass – you get away with it.

There are so many kids in the office, that all you have to do is throw out names, and dates. I do this to confuse the administrator until they give you a package deal, and you can negotiate your detentions. I

don't ever go to detentions. I get more detentions, and I made a deal and 20 of them disappeared.

Q: *When you go to the office, what usually happens?*

A: You just blow it off, because they always tell you the same thing. I had 15 Saturday Schools I was supposed to go to. I went to one Saturday School, when I was hungover and I left early. It was a waste of time. I missed the others because it interfered with work, and that's more important. You just negotiate and make deals. I have never served a detention. Its like if your mom yells, you just blow it off because she always yells, and that's all she does. If your dad yells, you pay attention because he'll take away privileges, like my car.

Q: *If you were in charge of discipline at the school, what would you to change things so that students don't keep committing the same infractions, and get sent down to the office so often?*

A: I would have a faculty meeting. I would tell the teachers that they are paid good money to work only 180 days. I would tell them to deal with it. Don't refer them to the office, just deal with it. Let students smoke. They're going to do it anyway. It's easy for teachers here. Most of the problems are not serious. Just deal with them. Teachers should take more and deal with discipline themselves. They should send kids to the office for really bad things, like fighting, weapons, throwing things like chairs.

Q.   *Do you think parents should be involved?*

A: For upper class kids, no. Leave parents out of it, because most of

them can't control their kids anyway. For freshmen, bring parents in. It's

not like in the past. Kids get away with more, like drinking. No one has

any [*] to take on kids. Cops don't even do anything. Cinnaminson has the

lowest crime rate, because a lot of times they just don't do anything and

let the kids go.

The student was very articulate. He appeared to take the questions being asked

seriously. Since nothing was ever done to him, he said he didn't worry about speaking his

own mind.

COUNSELOR A

Q: *Why are* the *same students on the Call Down List so often?*

A: The behaviors manifested are misinterpreted or overlooked by the

Faculty. The behavior usually indicates a hidden need. Students are

misbehaving because they are missing something. Current intervention is

missing the mark. They are not addressing the underlying problems, and

the interventions are off the mark.

For example, some students don't have the motivation to conform

to school policy. Nothing is motivating them to say, "I want to be in this

class." They may be preoccupied socially and emotionally. Some know

how to master deficits, others don't, and they distract. Teachers send these

students to the office. The office is missing the mark.

Q: *If you were in charge of discipline, how would you do things*

differently?

A: Given the parameters and the set criteria, for example cutting class, right now they are punishing instead of educating. A disciplinarian is an educator. The way things are now; they are sort of doing triage. They patch a problem, and hope it doesn't resurface.

Saturday School and detentions don't work for the habitual offenders because they don't care about school. There is usually something about the home situation. The kids have no fear for authority because of disruptions in family life. It's either too structured at home, so students need to have power over what happens in school; or, it's too loose, and students have all the power at home, and expect the same in school. When there are unresolved underlying issues, resistance and opposition to authority will be evident. If it's laissez-faire at home, then school is a set-up. If a student has no voice at home, and it is rigid, the student looks for a voice at school. Where the student is developmentally, also has a lot to do with how the behavior is.

Q: *So, what would you do?*

A: One thing I would do is invest in existing services, like PAC. I would increase the resources and functional power. I would look for earlier intervention. I would strengthen the Cinnamentors program [peer mentors that are matched with incoming freshmen]. In the first few weeks that students start high school, I would have interactive games and activities, between freshmen and staff, and freshmen and upper classmen.

This would provide a different first experience. Students would feel more comfortable and more encouraged to speak with others.

I would give the guidance department the authority to change schedules. Some students would do better with an abbreviated school day, other than CIE. I would link students up with community resources, and job training. I would have more hands on and vocational programs. I would change part of the program to adapt to the vocational program. I would identify students who need intervention before they get to the high school, probably at the end of eighth grade. I would also look at incorporating IEP (individualized educational plan) counseling for students in the regular track, not just Special Education.

Right now there are no teeth in the interventions with the crisis counselor. I would take an approach more like the criminal system. For repeat offenders, in order to determine what is driving the behavior, I would require them to speak to the school counselor-I would aggressively intervene with repeaters. Of course, to do this, it is necessary to increase the counselor student ratio from 1:750 to 1:400.

Staff training is also necessary. Teachers need to know about underlying behaviors. They need to have knowledge of psychological factors, and learning personalities. Teachers need to spend more time with team building at the beginning of the year. They need to be able to establish levels of trust and compliance. Oppositional behaviors that occur in the classroom can be 'cut off at the pass.'

For teachers, it is more a conduct issue vs. curriculum efficiency. It is a question of balancing the effective model with the efficiency model. Teachers need the power to teach and the power to intervene with behavior. Right now there is apathy on everybody's part because what is being done is not really working. It is important to change the vision and direction of the school in order to address the change in the demographics of the community, and to meet the needs of the students who frequently get into trouble.

The next interview was conducted with a veteran teacher who did not usually teach students who were on the *Call Down List.*

TEACHER A

Q: *Why are the same students on the Call Down List so often?*

A: First of all, if we have problems with them as freshmen and we are not successful, then we are not going to be successful with them as seniors. What we are doing now is not working. From the very being, there has to be parental support and involvement. Kids can't learn to discipline themselves. They are just not motivated. The disaffected students have disaffected parents.

Q: *If you were in charge, what would you do?*

A: Parents need to be involved sooner. Just sending out the letters, notifying them each time their child commits an infraction in school and has to serve a detention or go to Saturday School, just is not working. Most of the time the letters are intercepted and the parent never knows there is a problem. There needs to be personal contact with the parent and more follow through, particularly when

the student is called down to the office frequently. There is little follow through and no real consequence. The problem is just a reflection of a general apathy on the part of the students and the parents, as well as a lack of vision and leadership the school district.

It is interesting to note that the student, the counselor, and the teacher all agreed that current policy and procedures were not working, that intervention should begin earlier, and that parents need to be involved more, and sooner.

TABLE 2   STUDENTS ON THE CALL DOWN LISTS 10+ TIMES

REASONS FOR BEING CALLED TO THE OFFICE

Student Grade/ID	Total Times	Cutting Classes	Behavior Mc/Dr*	Fighting	Smoking	Missed Det/SS	Lateness	Car Issue	Other	Reason
A/A*	10					5	1		4	Credit make-up
A/B	10	5	3			5				
A/C	15	5				8			2	Left School
A/D	10					9			1	Offensive language
A/E	10		3			6			1	Left School
A/F	23		12			8	3			
A/G	17		8			4	5			
B/A	25	2	40			8	3	2	3	Misuse of pass
B/B	20	5				11	4			
B/C	26	19				7				
B/D	16	12			2	1			1	Credit make-up
B/E	14	3	2		1	5	1		2	Misuse of pass
B/F	22	7	2			12	1			
B/G	20	13	3		1	4			1	Truant
B/H	20	2	8		2	5	2		2	Beeper, Walkman
C/A	34	6	3			12	7		1	Credit make-up
									1	Left campus
C/B	23	3	2		1	11	6	1		
C/C	34	16	7		1		4		4	Left school
									1	Credit make-up
									1	Mtg w/counselor
C/D	35	23	4			8	1		1	Failure to take drug test
C/E	17	4	2	1		6	1		1	No pass
									1	Credit make-up
									1	Ate in class
C/F	23	9	2			12			1	Misuse of pass
									1	Credit make-up
D/A	5		5							
D/B	5	1			2	1			1	Report late to school yet left home on time

*Misconduct/Disruptive Behavior

A Group = Freshmen in March who became Sophomores in September.
B Group = Sophomores in March who became Juniors in September.
C Group = Juniors in March who became Seniors in September.
D Group = Freshmen in September, no record available for March

TABLE 3   STUDENTS ON THE CALL DOWN LISTS 10+ TIMES

ACTION TAKEN FOR REFERRALS

Student Grade/ID	Total Times	# Days given Detention	# Days given Saturday School	# Days In-School Suspension	# Days Out of School Suspension	Parent Conference	Other
A/A*	10		20				
A/B	10	6				1	
A/C	15	11	8	6			
A/D	10	14			2		1
A/E	10	12	2	1			
A/F	23	45		1	1	1	1
A/G	17	9	12		1		
B/A	25	21	4	4			5
B/B	20	22	2	4			3
B/C	26	9	10	8	2	1	
B/D	16	5	10	1	2		
B/E	14	6	4	1			2
B/F	22	2	25	1	1		1
B/G	20	3	12	7			
B/H	20	24		1		1	3
C/A	34	13	23	1	5	1	
C/B	23	24	6	1			1
C/C	34	8	13	2	2		
C/D	35	5	25	5	14		1
C/E	17	4	13	1	3		1
C/F	23	4	21	2			
D/A	5	3	2				
D/B	5	3	4				1

A Group = Freshmen in March who became Sophomores in September.
B Group = Sophomores in March who became Juniors in September.
C Group = Juniors in March who became Seniors in September.
D Group = Freshmen in September, no record available for March

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

As the research findings and study results indicate, there is a population in

suburban school districts that can be considered at-risk. At Cinnaminson High School, the

at-risk students are frequently on the *Call Down List*. The most frequent reason for

placement on the list is not misconduct, fighting, or smoking in the bathroom. The most

frequent reasons for someone to be seen by an administrator are not going to class, and

not going to the detention or Saturday School which was assigned as punishment for not

going to class. Students do report to the office when called, but they do not comply with

the intended administrative action. The students on the *Call Down List* most frequently

are neither threatened nor intimidated by the idea of going to the principal's office, and

consider it just another way to get out of class. Once offending students realize that not

going to detention or Saturday School simply results in the assignment of more

detentions and Saturday Schools, which they also ignore, they also recognize there will

be few consequences for misbehavior. For the more serious infractions, such as violence

or drug possession, the consequences were more direct and involved immediate parental

notification and suspension from school.

The students that were most frequently on the *Call Down List* were more likely to

be enrolled in non-college preparatory classes. Academic standing was therefore

unimportant to them, and having disciplinary infractions on their record was likewise

unimportant. While graduation may be important, most complain that school is boring

and a waste of time. The instructional time they miss either from cutting, or from their weekly and in some cases daily, trips to the office was just not valued.

When a school's administration continues to pull students from class for reasons such as non-compliance with assigned detention, they are inadvertently placing more value on being out of class than on remaining in class. The amount of instructional time students miss from either their first, second, or third period class can also be cumulative for those on the lists frequently. There are some students that miss portions of the same class three times a week. Since the study supported the findings that most of the students frequently on the lists are also in low track classes, these are also the students who can least afford to miss more instructional time since they are already functioning below grade level. They are also least likely to be able to step back into the classroom late, after being returned from the office, and then to unobtrusively and independently complete their assignments. Their behavior can also be deemed off task and disruptive since they have a difficult time knowing what to do since the lesson had already started. In some cases they get written up again, are referred to the office, and the cycle begins anew.

In addition to instructional time lost, the administrative time lost is also significant. Often, two administrators meet with the students on the *Call Down List* one to three periods a day, sometimes five days a week. This is a considerable amount of time for the school's educational leaders to be devoting each day, when it is acknowledged that the *Call Down* conferences do not seem to be making much of an impact on elimination of the misbehavior. It would seem quite frustrating for an administrator to spend so much time implementing policies that do not work, and are of benefit to no one.

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To look at it another way, administrative time is quite valuable. The investment a community makes on a school's leadership could be better spent on improving curriculum, on professional development and staff training, on planning for the future, and on creating a school climate where even the lowest track students value their instructional time.

The underlying factors for student misbehavior, and student non-compliance with rules must be addressed. Why is it that the students who are more likely to be on the *Call Down List* are also more likely to remain separate from the rest of the school, and do not participate in the wide range of school activities, clubs, and sports available to them? The research indicated that successful students have a sense of belonging, while students who are at-risk often do not. The research also indicated that students who misbehave also perceived that teachers were not supportive, often punitive, and did not care. Students who are frequently on the list become stigmatized as troublemakers and teachers regularly question the students' behavior. It is logical to conclude that a program designed to encourage a sense of belonging, and which emphasizes effort and personal development will address some of the underlying causes of student misbehavior.

When students say that their classes are boring, and that is why they cut class, they are not worrying about the work or the learning they are missing. They are not motivated either intrinsically by their own drive to learn or extrinsically by the grades or their class rank. While this study did not investigate social factors that lead to misbehavior, it would be interesting to find out whether or not the students on the *Call Down List* have factors outside of school which contribute to their lack of interest either in school or in following the rules. Students who must work after school or on Saturdays

will most likely not go to detention on those days. Students whose parents allow smoking at home are less likely to understand why they cannot smoke in school. Students who have little supervision or few boundaries set at home, will be more likely to reject attempts to discipline them at school. If the values presented at school are different than those presented at home, then it is difficult for a school to enforce a set of standards that the student does not have to comply with anywhere else. Interventions will be successful to motivate the students and modify their behavior if they consciously address any underlying social factors that lead to misbehavior.

The ideal time for intervention to begin would be no later than the student's freshmen year in high school. It would be very helpful to the high school administration to recognize that students who enter high school with a history of misbehavior are likely to continue misbehaving. Rather than being punitive in response to misbehavior, innovative programs may be put in place which would target and address the needs of those who have a greater likelihood of having difficulty in high school. Parental involvement, classroom and curriculum restructuring, and staff training in behavior modification techniques would be necessary components of such an intervention plan.

There are programs in place at Cinnaminson High School that are successful in keeping the marginal student engaged. Most of these programs include learning a skill through hands-on activities. Similar to vocational school programs, they tend to have a direct relationship to the world outside of school - the world of work. Students who in their sophomore and junior years cut class often, and were therefore referred to the office, no longer do so in their senior year because they are involved in one of these programs. One important feature of these programs is that the students leave the campus and

actually go to a job where they learn on site. A similar model could be developed for the underclassmen who seem to have difficulty conforming to rules and going to classes regularly. Instead of going to a job, students might be assigned to a community service project, again expanding a program that already exists in school. The community service programs that do exist at Cinnaminson High School are currently open to students who are, for the most part, already high achievers and rarely on the *Call Down List*. In the early high school years, rather than focusing on the vocational skills, a program of this sort would encourage teamwork, and a sense of success by having students complete tangible projects of use to the community. Success for students who misbehave is often not achieved through academic success, and therefore must come from other sources.

There are many models of successful programs that combine academics and community service. One model, The New Jersey Youth Corps program, has been in existence for almost fifteen years and is funded by the state of New Jersey. The population served has traditionally been the student who had not only been at risk while in school, but ultimately dropped out. One of the reasons for its success has been attributed to the sense of belonging that corps members develop. Since students who misbehave are also more likely to drop out, and a reason for misbehavior may be attributed to the lowered sense of belonging, then a program that gives students a sense of belonging from the time they enter high school may also help prevent misbehavior.

Funding for such a program can be sought from private foundations or government grants, many of which are being offered to prevent student failure and dropping out. A program of this sort will not only not help those students involved, but will also help the community and not create additional costs for the district to bear. As an

admimistrator, funding of new programs and cost effectiveness of existing programs are very important considerations. An effective leader is able to not only recognize that problems exist, but is also able to devise creative solutions that address the problem and can be paid for without having a negative impact on the overall budget. It makes little sense to solve one problem by creating others.

In addition to the lowered sense of belonging, many of the students on the *Call Down List* lack the motivation to do well in school. While this study did not go into the reasons for the lack of motivation, some students indicated that they just did not care about school, that their parents did not care (as long as they graduated), and that many of their teachers "couldn't care less." These same students often do not have a clear vision for their future, and have ill-defined goals for life after high school. One way of addressing the lack of motivation would be to implement a community mentoring program.

As the literature indicated, mentoring programs have proven successful for at risk populations elsewhere. Involvement with mentors drawn from the larger community, carefully matched with student goals and interests, may also be a viable, and cost effective intervention that can be implemented as early as freshmen year. Students who seem to be having difficulty complying with rules or adjusting to high school may benefit from having a mentor who can establish a level of trust and respect that may be unavailable elsewhere. Having an objective, positive adult not affiliated with either school or family, and who is not only a role model, but also takes an interest in their day to day successes as well as failures can be, for some students, the motivating factor for future achievement. One caution is that the mentor must be carefully selected and trained.

Again, model programs exist, and can be replicated in Cinnaminson. The cost for this type of program can also be obtained from private sources, government grants, and foundations.

As an educational leader, it is extremely important to recognize that a problem exists. It is not effective leadership to identify a problem, to know that what is being done is not working, and to then continue to do things the same way. This intern realizes that when the majority of a school's population is doing well, and those few who misbehave really have little or no impact on the overall school climate, it may seem more expedient to continue doing what has always been done. However, a school's success is not measured just by the students who are on the honor roll, but by all the students that attend. Systems must be in place that follow not only academics and attendance, but also behavior. When no database existed that tracked students on the *Call Down List*, it became necessary to create one. Many staff members spent a portion of their workday concerned with the students on the list, from the office staff that created the list daily, called the students from class, and recorded information on the discipline cards, to the administrators who saw a parade of the same students. As an administrator, this intern will be aware that attention must be paid to the few as well as to the many, and that students who stay in trouble need more than an aggressive discipline policy. As an effective leader, it is necessary to seek changes in policy and procedures when those that are in place are ineffective, and to utilize the time of all in the learning community in ways that benefit all the students.

Further study is needed into the underlying causes of student misbehavior. While this study identified some of the common characteristics of students of the *Call Down*

List, little was learned about possible causes. The study was able to generalize causes of misbehavior based on the literature search, but most of the literature reported findings in populations that were different than Cinnaminson. Reports about populations drawn from urban districts usually attributed factors such as poverty, gang involvement, and drugs as some of the underlying causes for student misbehavior. By having a better understanding of the underlying causes of misbehavior in a suburban setting, developing interventions that work will be more likely.

While the numbers of students who can be considered at-risk are still relatively small, they must be taken just as seriously. In 1998 and 1999 students from suburban middle class high school communities with characteristics similar to those profiled by this study (students who were called "outcasts" at school, who were frequently in trouble, who did not fit into the mainstream of student life), were the students who murdered their teachers and classmates in places like Littleton, Colorado and Springfield, Oregon.

Students who are angry, apathetic, unmotivated and discouraged are not the majority of students at Cinnaminson High School. Like the students and administrations of the schools in Colorado and Oregon schools, most people were surprised that such horrendous acts of violence and hatred could happen in nice, middle class, suburban communities. After these extreme acts of violence occurred, analysts and educators concluded that there may have been warning signs that were ignored. There are students in the suburbs that can be considered at-risk, and the signs are present usually before high school. It is essential to pay attention to the signals that warn of potential failure or trouble in any student. It is important for a future administrator to recognize the

importance of addressing the needs of all students, including those who misbehave and find themselves frequently sent to the office.

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APPENDIX A

CINNAMINSON HIGH SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY

SECTION E: DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

The teacher is responsible for the proper conduct of students within any jurisdictional area of the high school. The following procedures are recommended.

For classroom behavior problems such as tardiness, bringing food into the class, writing on desks, and disruptive behavior, the teacher should keep a written classroom record of each incident for each student. The following steps should be taken:

1.   Warn the student. Detain the student after class to speak to him/her alone.

2.   Contact the parent by telephone or letter.

3.   Detain the student after school. Give one day's notice.

One or more steps may be taken at one time. If the problem continues, contact the student's counselor, and if the problem continues to occur, then the teacher should contact the Vice Principal. A written summary of steps taken by the teacher must be made available to the Vice Principal at that time.

For serious classroom offenses, the student may be sent to the office from the classroom with a note explaining what happened (contact the office to be sure the student arrives). The note will be returned to the teacher with the disposition of the case on it.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In addition to students, teachers and administrators, parents have a responsibility for discipline and the right to be informed when disciplinary action has been taken by the administrators. All major or recurring disciplinary actions will require a parent conference.

INFRACTIONS

The following list is intended to be a guide for students and staff; it is not all-encompassing. Other behavioral problems not precisely defined will be handled with discretion by the staff and administration. All out-of-school suspensions are preceded by a parent conference. Students are prohibited from participating in or attending any school function during the time they are suspended out-of-school.

Specific Infraction	Administrative Action
Alcohol/drug abuse: coming to school, a school activity, school grounds, or a bus after consuming alcohol and/or drugs	**First Offense**: Out of school suspension(10), Police referral **Subsequent offense**: Out of school suspension (10), Police referral, Disciplinary hearing before the Board
Consumption of alcohol/drugs in the school building, on school grounds or a bus, or at a school activity.	**First Offense**: Out of school suspension(10), Police referral **Subsequent offense**: Out of school suspension (10), Police referral, Disciplinary hearing before the Board of Education
Possession of drugs and/or alcohol in the school building, on school grounds or a bus, or at a school activity.	**First Offense**: Out of school suspension(10), Police referral **Subsequent offense**: Out of school suspension (10), Police referral, Disciplinary hearing before the Board of Education
Selling alcohol and/or drugs, attempting to distribute them in the school building, on school grounds or bus, or at a school activity.	Out of school suspension (20), Police referral required. Disciplinary hearing before the Board of Education for expulsion.
Possession of a weapon.*	Out of school suspension, Police referral , Disciplinary hearing before the Board of Education for expulsion
Cutting homeroom, class or study hall: failure to report for an assigned class or homeroom or study hall.	**First Offense**: Saturday detention **Subsequent offense**: Saturday detention
Cutting Saturday School Sessions.	**First Offense**: Saturday detention(1 + original) **Subsequent offense**: Saturday detention(1 + original) and parent conference.
Fighting - Physical Contact, Harassment.*	**First Offense**: Out of school suspension(1-3) **Subsequent offense**: Out of school suspension (3-5)
In a restricted area/outside of building without written permission.	**First Offense**: Detention **Subsequent offense**: Detention

Insubordination - Refusing to obey a staff member.	**First Offense:** Out of school suspension(1-3) **Subsequent offense:** Out of school suspension (1-5)
Lateness to class.	**First Offense:** Warning and/or Detention **Subsequent offense:** Detention
Leaving campus without permission/truancy.	**First Offense:** Saturday detention (2), Revocation of parking privileges. **Subsequent offense:** Saturday detention (3)
Misbehavior in class.	**First Offense:** Detention **Subsequent offense:** Saturday Detention
Misuse of parent/teacher note.	**First Offense:** Detention, Parent conference **Subsequent offense:** Saturday Detention
Misuse of pass: not having a pass when required; using an invalid pass.	**First Offense:** Detention **Subsequent offense:** Saturday Detention
Offensive language or gesture directed to staff.	**First Offense:** Out of school suspension(1-3) **Subsequent offense:** Out of school suspension (3-5)
Parking and Traffic violations.	**First Offense:** Detention, Revocation of parking privileges. **Subsequent offense:** Detention, Revocation of parking privileges.
Smoking, chewing tobacco, or possession of tobacco products on school grounds or bus, or at a school activity.	**First Offense:** Detention (3) and referral to smoking cessation program. **Subsequent offense:** Saturday Detention
Tampering with fire alarms or fire equipment.	**First Offense:** Out of school suspension(1-3), Police referral **Subsequent offense:** Out of school suspension (3-5), Police referral
Vandalism, including stealing, defacing, damaging or tampering with personal/ school property.	**First Offense:** Saturday detention, restitution and Police referral.

	Subsequent offense Out of school suspension(1-5), restitution and Police referral
Violation of school dress code.	**First Offense**: Warning **Subsequent offense**: Detention

Additional calls or conferences with parents will occur throughout the disciplinary action process. Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of days assigned.

Teachers shall report to the Vice Principal or Principal any student observed or suspected of violating any rule on drugs or alcohol while in the school building on school grounds, riding a bus, or attending a school activity.

NOTE: A detailed listing of procedures to be followed by the staff and the administration when a student is suspected of drug or alcohol involvement is located in the Administrative Regulation on Discipline, below.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

Disruptive Students   5114.1

Definition

A disruptive students is one who has difficulty in establishing good relationships with peers and/or adult authority figures. This difficulty manifests itself in a patten of conduct which is in defiance of school rules and regulations and hinders academic success for other students as well as himself/herself.

Identification

Students who fit this definition should be identified by the professional staff, usually the classroom teacher, who follows the guidelines established in the "Faculty Handbook" and the "Student Handbook."

Corrective Procedures

1.   The classroom teacher usually will be the first person to identify disruptive students. The teacher's options include: simple reprimand; teacher detention; assistance from department chairperson; contacting parents; enlisting aid of a counselor; and referral to a vice principal. Serious and continued disruption may result in Saturday detention and/or suspension from school by the principal.

2.   Counselors shall participate in the counseling of disruptive students and the management of the student's problem in relation-ship to parents, staff, and administration. Adjustments to the program may be recommended, and a plan to remediate the problem will be developed. If this does not resolve the problem, the student will be referred to the Child Study Team and/or to the appropriate state agencies.

3.   A building administrator will assume the primary role in enforcing the discipline code as established by the discipline code, district policy, and state regulation.   A building administrator will work in conjunction with the student, parent, counselor, and support personnel to bring about positive change.

Documentation

        1.   Student disciplinary records
        2.   Full report out-of-school suspensions
        3.   Incident reports of vandalism
        4.   Student Handbook
        5.   Board Policy Manual

Adopted 10/2/90

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF CALL DOWN LIST

EXAMPLE OF DISCIPLINE RECORD

Date: April 12, 1999

To: All Staff

From: Mr. K███████Mr. W██████

Subject: CALL-DOWN LIST

PERIOD 1—Mr. K██████	PERIOD 2—Mr. W█████	PERIOD 3—Mr. K████████
████████ Todd 9	██████ Jason 11	███e, Art 11
█████, Hugo 11	██████ Nick 9	████Eric 9
████ Brad 11	███, Dan 11	███████, Bill 11
██████, Justin 10	██████ Jessica 11	███████████ 11
██████, Ryan 9	█████hawn 12	█████████ 10
███████, Tyrone 9	████, Jim 12	██████s 11
██████Luis 11	██████, Chris 11	██████ll 11
██████, Tyreak 10	██████ 10	████████al 9
██████iffany 10	████ie 10	████████ie 10
█████, Daniel 9	███████r 12	████████e 11
	████████ 11	████████ 12
8:10	█████en 11	
█████ Matt 12	Jon███████s 12	

OSS APRIL 12: G████████████

dh

Date	Description	Action
10/6	inappropriate behavior	PM 10/8/97
10/8	missed PM det - must serve or ISS	PM 10/14 - 10/15
10/14 - 10/15	make up detentions	PM 10/22 - 10/29
10/16/97	failure to serve detention	ISS 10/20
10/22	missed PM detention	PM 10/28/97
11/24/97	misbehavior in class	PM 12/2
12/2	reschedule PM	PM 12/10
12/10	make up detention	PM 12/17
12/17	missed detention	PM 1/12 - 1/13
1/9/98	4th lateness	AM 1/13/98
1/13	5th late; reschedule AM	AM 1/20 1/21
1/9	missed PM detention	PM 1/20
1/20 - 1/21	make up detentions - can be changed to AM	AM 2/3 - 2/4 2/10 2/11
2/2/98	6th late	AM 2/17
3/3 - 3/4	missed detentions AM & PM	SS 3/24
2/6 - 2/9	failure to attend det; inappropriate behavior	ISS 3/19
3/24/98	failure to attend SS	SS 3/7 - 3/21
3/27 - 1/28	cut classes	SS 4/4
3/9	7th late	warned
3/20	missed 3rd & 4th period	SS 4/25 - 5/9 - 5/2
4/4	make up Sat School	SS 5/2
5/4	cut class on 4/30	SS 5/12/98
5/23	reschedule Sat School	SS 5/30
5/27/98	forward 3/20 w/ Mrs Rossi Must have permission of both teachers	SS 6/6
5/27	cut pd 8	SS 6/13
	as of 6/98 0 days 10 SS	
9/28/98	Credit Make up	SS 10/10/98
9/28/98	cut class	SS 10/17/98
10/5	cut pd 2	SS 10/24
10/17/98	missed SS	SS 10/31 - 11/7
10/24 - 10/26	missed SS cut class pd 2	SS 11/21 - 10/5/98
10/28 - 10/29	cut class - pd 6 - both days	SS 12/12
10/30/98 - 1/2	missed SS - cut class	SS 12/19 - 1/9/98
11/6/98	reschedule SS	SS 1/23
11/17/98	misbehavior in Student Store disrespectful	loss of SS priv. ISS 11/98
11/21/98	missed SS	SS 1/30 - 2/6/99
11/25/98	cut class pd 6 & 8	SS 2/20
12/3/98	cut class pd 1	SS 2/27/98

Date	Description	Action
12/5/98	reschedule Sat School	SS 3/6/98
12/10/98	misconduct	PM 12/16/9
12/12	missed Sat School	SS 6/20/99
12/16	missed Det	PM 12/22 & 1/5
12/19	reschedule Sat School & missed det.	SS 3/27 - 4/12
1/30/99	missed SS	SS 4/24 & 5/1
2/5/99	insubordination	OSS 2/11
2/24/99	missed SS & left during break.	S.S 5/8 · 5/15
3/1/99	misuse of pass	PM 3/4
3/2 - 3/3	cuts. 2 days on 5th pd.	PM 3/10 3/16 3/17 3/23
	next major problem results in OSS	3/24 3/30 3/31 4/
3/6 - 3/8	missed SS & cut class	SS 5/23 - 6/5
3/9	missed detention	PM 4/14 - 4/20
3/12	missed detention	PM 4/21 & 27
3/16 · 3/17 3/	missed det. & sleeping in SS	PM 4/28 5/4 5/5 5/11
3/23 - 3/24	missed detention	PM 5/18 - 5/19 5/25 5/2

Biographical Data

Name	Carole J. Pearson
High School	Sheepshead Bay High School Brooklyn, New York
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts Art and Secondary Education Hunter College of the City University of New York New York, New York Teacher Certification Program Rutgers University Newark, New Jersey
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey
Present Occupation	English and Reading Teacher Cinnaminson High School Cinnaminson, New Jersey