Kindergarten to fourth grade student code of conduct

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KINDERGARTEN TO FOURTH GRADE
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

By
Carrieann L. Molnar

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
Of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
April 15, 2002

Approved by

Professor

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ABSTRACT

Carrieann L. Molnar
Kindergarten to Fourth Grade
Student Code of Conduct
May 2002
Dr. Kathy Sernak
School Administration

The study was designed to develop a kindergarten through fourth grade code of conduct for the Charles L. Spragg School. The parents and faculty completed a Likert style survey about the present discipline code. The study also reviewed the number of discipline referrals before and after the implementation of the new code of conduct.

The student population was comprised of approximately 353 pre-k through fourth grade students and 44 staff members. The surveys completed by the parents and staff were compiled and used to develop the new code of conduct. The number of discipline referrals for October, November, December and January were compared to the number that occurred during the same time period from the previous year. The number of discipline referrals increased along with the severity of the punishments for those rule infractions. The original hypothesis was that the number of discipline referrals would decrease because the students were aware of the new code of conduct. This was not the case within this study; in fact the number of discipline referrals increased.
MINI-ABSTRACT

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The study was designed to develop a kindergarten through fourth grade code of conduct for the Charles L. Spragg School. The study quantitatively analyzed the number of referrals before and after implementation of the new code. The number of referral increased after the implementation.
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Chapter 1

Kindergarten to Fourth Grade Student Code Of Conduct

Introduction

Student behavior is a vital component of the educational process. We must teach students that they need to take responsibility for their actions. This will lead them to understand that there is a positive effect related to positive decisions. Encouraging proper behavior is a team effort that should involve teachers, parents and the administration. The development of a written code of conduct has led to a more positive environment within the Charles L. Spragg School. The character education program that had been implemented within the Egg Harbor City district has also seen a benefit from the new code of conduct. The character education program has helped develop well-rounded students. The schools’ goal was to see an increase in self-esteem and a sense of pride in the students exhibiting positive behavior. This goal was accomplished by developing a written disciplinary code of conduct that is both consistent and concise in its use.

The character education program has improved the school environment by modeling polite behavior and developing respect for others. The character education program, however was implemented by the administration without teacher or parent input. A code of conduct committee was made up of volunteers from the Egg Harbor City school community.

The process of developing a code of conduct allowed for all stake holders within the school to have input into the discipline code. A school committee of parents, teachers, and students established this code of conduct. This committee developed procedures for teachers and students to follow regarding discipline. The committee defined acceptable
behavior but also had to define specific procedures to follow when students broke the rules. The code established consequences for any rule infraction. The long-term goal of the committee was to improve the discipline of the students. With the development of a code of conduct and its implementation, a goal for students was to show signs of self-discipline because they knew the rules. As students' behavior and self-discipline occurred there was an improvement within the school. The most obvious improvement was the administration's ability to spend time on other issues instead of discipline, therefore, improving the school.

Purpose of the Study.

The development of a kindergarten through fourth grade code of conduct helped to establish and maintain a positive educational environment for the Charles L. Spragg School. The need for consistency in discipline issues within the elementary school was the reason for the development of this code. Many times, changes that occurred with new building administration every few years hindered both the students' and teachers' ability to identify what was acceptable and what wasn't with behavioral issues. This caused a great deal of confusion for both staff and students. The creation of an actual document that delineated the punishment for non-acceptable behaviors was the next logical step to improve student behavior. As an added benefit, a change in administrators or teachers would not affect how a student was dealt with when it comes to unacceptable student behaviors. Therefore, the code would reinforce consistent application of the rules. The ultimate goal of the study was to establish a basis for an elementary code of conduct consistent with the middle school's policy already in place.
Significance

The study process attempted to develop a code of conduct that would enable administrators, teachers, students and parents to be apprised of the discipline procedures within the C. L. S. School. The development of the code of conduct involved all interested parties: teachers, parents, and students at the C. L. S. School on a voluntary basis. The use of volunteers to serve on the committee along with the utilization of written surveys to parents and teachers ensured the development of a code of conduct that had the support of everyone.

Along with the development of the code of conduct, it was most important to insure consistency in the handling of discipline issues. The long-term goal was to prepare students for the behavioral expectations they encounter in middle school and high school.

Definitions

In order to understand the study process, it is important to evaluate and teach key terms related to the process. Establishing clear definitions is a key element in understanding and implementing this process.

*Discipline*- the subjection to rules.

*Code of Conduct* – A document that spells out the rules of acceptable behavior within a school and the punishment or consequences for breaking those rules.

Limitations of the Study

The study confined itself to the involvement of students, parents, teachers, and administration of the C. L. S. School, which is located in southern New Jersey. The committee’s developmental core was on a volunteer basis, which initiated support for the actual code of conduct that was developed. The use of volunteers allowed those who truly
were interested in the issue to establish the code. The use of surveys was an important part of the process. The actual number of returned surveys added to the committee’s information, yet could put limitations on the study if the return was insufficient. An insufficient return could also affect the outcome of the study.

Setting of the Study

The project site is a small town in southern New Jersey, located about forty miles south of a major metropolitan area. The city is six miles long and one mile wide with a population that fluctuates between 4,500 and 5,000 residents.

The history of the town goes back many years, but for the sake of this project, 1854 will be considered the date of its founding. Many of the original citizens of the town are of German decent. At the time, these community members worked as farmers or were employed in the garment industry.

In 1900, about twelve dozen Italian men came to live and work in the community adding to the German culture. In the late 1920’s a real estate agent went to South Carolina and offered great deals to the African Americans to move to this small New Jersey town, adding yet another ethnic group to the city. The ethnic mix of the population of the town remained the same until 1955, when Pace Maker Boats, a local manufacturer, went from producing wooden to fiberglass boats. Their current employees did not want to work with dangerous, difficult and dirty fiberglass. This forced the boat company to hire Hispanic field laborers from a small town north of the city. The Hispanics moved in, again adding to the ethnicity of the small town. The town was now was made up of Germans, Italians, African-Americans and Hispanics.
This community kept the same ethnic makeup until the late 1960’s. At this time, the city sold off a portion of the city-owned land. Investors and town fathers alike both had hopes that the development of apartments would spur the growth of the community. The first set of apartments built was known as the Philadelphia Avenue apartments. These residences were built on the west end of town.

In 1973, on the other end of town, another set of apartments was constructed. These were known as the Washington Avenue apartments. Both of these apartment complexes were designed to accommodate low-income housing. The community, made up of garment workers, farmers, and boat workers, was now being joined by people from other communities who were poor. These new members of the community did not have the same work ethic as the other residents. The lack of desire to work continued to change the atmosphere of the community.

Additionally, the development of regional shopping malls and the increase in availability to travel outside of the small town caused yet another change. Community members stopped walking downtown to patronize local businesses. Instead, the residents were traveling to the big shopping malls to purchase products that were once sold downtown. As patronage in the local stores declined, the economic needs in the population’s changing culture were affected. The main street became a hangout and a place for young people to congregate and deal drugs. Hanging out, drug dealing, and the increase in violence in the apartments all contributed to the decline of this once hard working community.
As the town's composition changed, the schools began to change. The town had a high school, which was built in 1923, and saw its last graduating class in 1960. The students then started to attend regional high schools, built because of the growth that was occurring within the surrounding towns. The addition of a new elementary school in 1955 changed the use of the old high school building. Presently the old high school serves a fifth through eighth-grade population while kindergarten through fourth graders are housed in the elementary school.

With the community changes, population changes, and the new career paths of the people in the town, additional problems surfaced. The school population was causing disruptions for teachers, parents, and administration. The decline of self-discipline was very apparent when looking within the classrooms. The changes within the community directly influenced behavior problems that became apparent in the school district. This in turn led to an inability to attract good teachers and administrators to stay involved with the district.

The central administration of superintendent and business administrator was the same for many years. The central administration had become very complacent when dealing with any type of every day events happening within the individual schools. This affected the school at all levels. For example, the elementary school since 1978 has had six different leaders in the position of principal. Two of the principals were in the position for eight years. Yet, within the past six years there has been a new principal every two years. With the changing principals came a varied vision for the school. This was very apparent when it came to discipline. The conclusion is that any type of change can affect the overall culture and vision of the school.
Today the state rates the district as a rural group B district. The B is one step below an Abbott school as far as state funding. The entire district student population is 585. The kindergarten to fourth grade elementary school has a population of 337 students. The ethnic breakdown within the elementary school is 38% White, 21% Black, 37% Hispanic and 2% Asian. The C. L. S. School also has a rate of 64% of the students qualifying for free/reduced meals. The mobility rate or number of students that have transferred in or out of the elementary school is 31%. That mobility rate is 12.4% above the state average, adding yet another factor to the declining school culture.

The elementary school has a staff of 44. Eleven members of the staff are residents of the town, while three others were former residents and graduates of the district. The staff is multi-cultural and have mixed racial background.

Organization of the Study

The process by which data was to be collected for this study primarily involved a committee made up of teachers, parents, administrators, and students. The volunteer committee reviewed the previous two years discipline referrals. These referrals were prioritized by seriousness of offense and frequency of occurrence. The committee organized all the collected information and developed specific consequences that related to specific offenses. The committee also reviewed other school districts’ policies that have been implemented at similar elementary schools. There was a survey given to all faculty and parents to help define their concerns about discipline.
Once the code had been developed it was then presented to the Board of Education for approval. The implementation of the code of conduct was dependent on the administration. The comparison of the previous discipline problems to those occurring after the code’s implementation helped to determine the effectiveness of the code.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Student behavior can influence the educational process within schools. Recognizing this fact, this intern has established the need to develop and implement a code of conduct or discipline code in the Charles L. Spragg School. Research supports the fact that schools with a defined discipline code have a better climate for learning.

Thompson and Walter (1998) state that when defining the word “discipline,” many may feel it is something negative: paddling, hitting, standing in the hall, missing lunch or some other type of punishment. However, discipline does not have to be negative. If students can develop the ability to use self-discipline, they can correct and control and develop individual responsibility, which helps to promote a positive educational environment. A positive spin on discipline will help the educational process.

Within most schools discipline is addressed by the use of a code of conduct.

The first question is why should one develop a code of conduct? Haroun, Ramzi, and O’Hanlon (1997) state that discipline is without question the most essential and the most difficult aspect of education, for without discipline there can be no effective teaching. Most of the research addresses the fact that with good discipline come safe, orderly schools, which creates a positive learning environment for the students. Gaustad (1992) states school discipline has two main goals: (1) ensure the safety of staff and students, and (2) create an environment conducive for learning. An effective code begins with planning. Why take the time to develop a discipline code? There are many reasons, but Williams (1993) states that school leaders often do not recognize the need for planning, nor do they always understand the full cost of making mistakes.
LeScaut (1998) agrees that a discipline code becomes a resource only when it is properly developed and utilized. McGiboney (1992) adds that the development of a written discipline or conduct code is crucial for establishing a uniform discipline system. Coloroso (1997) states that it sounds ridiculous but unfortunately, as schools develop their approaches to discipline, many do the equivalent of using grape jelly where cement is needed or of nailing shut the door. The result is that either the discipline structure does not stand solidly, or the structure is closed off with some people locked in and others shut out.

Coloroso (1997) discusses three types of schools. The “brick wall school” is a rigid structure used for control, manipulation and power. The “jellyfish school” has no firm parts and simply floats along wherever the current takes it. The “backbone school” has a consistent structure that is flexible and functional, not rigid and unyielding. Knowing how most schools function, one can see how the environment and climate could affect the students’ and staffs’ ideas of discipline and how a code of conduct is used.

Coloroso’s examples of a “brick wall school” will not allow for students to grow. They may actually feel like prisoners. On the other hand the “jellyfish school” has no rules and just flows along. The best-disciplined type of school is the “backbone school,” one that has structure and flexibility. This type of structured program will develop a climate of high expectations. With the creation of high expectations many students step up and accept the challenge. (Williams, 1993)
William (1993) suggests that the first step is to work with a representative group from the school and community to select and define the desired goals that the discipline plans should foster. A discipline planning committee should include administrators, teachers, school psychologist, school social workers, students, and parents according to McGiboney (1993). The evaluation of the problems that are occurring within the school itself will determine the development of a successful code. This is necessary since some schools get bogged down trying to write goals and objectives instead of looking at the problems. LaScult (1988) suggests identifying and writing down all the unwritten rules of behavior. Menacker, Hurwitz, and Weldon (1990) suggest gathering and analyzing discipline records, starting with the most serious and the most frequently reported offenses. By collecting this data, the committee will be able to focus on the needs of the school and its community. Once the evaluation of this information takes place, it becomes much easier to determine where to begin the development of the code of conduct.

Jones (1984) states that a program should be congruent with the school's stated goals regarding student academic and personal skill development. However, along with what needs to be fostered, it is also necessary to take into consideration the laws and policies that are set by the state. Gaustad (1992) confirms that a school discipline plan must conform to state and federal statutes and to district policy. Menaker, Hurwitz, and Weldon (1990) state that the new policy should apply the principles of law and court decisions to the local school discipline code. Knowledge of these laws can reduce the chance of imposing overly harsh or unfair discipline measures that could violate principles of due process, freedom of expression, and reasonable searches. McGiboney
(1993) referenced the 1975 U.S. Supreme Court case *Goss v Lopez*, mandating that students are entitled to due process rights when accused of committing an offense, which could result in the loss of approximately ten or more school days. The development of the code must take into consideration both the laws and goals of the district when it comes to discipline. Without either of these pieces the code will not be successful. The code needs to consider the crimes, the punishments, and the consequences to the students.

The development of an effective code of conduct takes and needs the input of all parties involved. When one takes the time to get parents', teachers', and students' thoughts about discipline, that information will only enhance the effectiveness of the code of conduct. The individuals involved in the development of the code will know their needs are being met. LeScault (1988) supports this idea by stating that there is a need to provide opportunities for involvement by all faculty and staff members, students, and parents in the development or refinement of a written discipline code. The involvement of all parties is a key part to receive necessary support for the code's implementation and effectiveness.

The involvement of all parties also includes the school board. If the board of education is going to question the number of suspensions or even detentions, the school code of discipline will lose its effectiveness, just as administrators lose their effectiveness when questioned why they did what they did. McGiboney (1993) establishes that any discipline system is only as good as the level of support provided by the local board of education.
The school climate also plays a major role in the development, implementation, and effectiveness of any type of discipline code. If the climate is different from the principles of the school, the code of conduct will be ineffective. Williams (1993) states that the goal is to create conditions in the school environment, which will enhance the development of self-disciplined individuals. Bear (1998) states that the American public’s belief that schools should play a primary role in teaching self-discipline has never been greater than it is today. Young people often are looking for a direction and a reason for heading in it. The changes in both the school climate and the environment can affect discipline. Wayson, DeVoss, Kaezer, Lasley, Pinnell, and the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline (1982) have developed a handbook for developing schools with good discipline. This handbook presents twelve characteristic of a well-disciplined school. This group proposes creating a total school environment that is conducive to good discipline rather than adopting isolated practices to deal with discipline problems.

Another component in the development, implementation, and effectiveness of a code of discipline is the principal. Without a strong leader who is fair and consistent, no discipline plan will be successful. The Aft.Org web site states that if a discipline code is applied consistently from the classroom to the cafeteria, and from the playground to the school bus, enforcement of the code must be uniform. Consistency helps to prevent many problems that may arise within a school. The schools today certainly need to address the behavior of students and what needs to be done to improve it.

Many teachers feel that the behavior of students interferes with teaching. Latham (1998) states that one third of all teachers’ report that students’ misbehavior interferes with their teaching. This statistic demonstrates why it is important to have some sort of
discipline code. In order for a discipline code to be proactive rather than reactive, it has to entail the following components: planning, evaluating, analyzing of data, and consideration of current law and district policy. The success of a code of conduct depends on the support of parents, teachers, students, administrators, and the board of education. All of the research agrees that the students and teachers, whose schools have a well-developed discipline code, have a better learning environment than those who do not have a code of conduct.
Chapter 3
Design of the Study

The study was the development, construction, and implementation of a code of conduct for students at the Charles L. Spragg School in Egg Harbor City, NJ. The study had a quantitative design from which the new code was developed and implemented.

The qualitative part of the study was done by the use of a survey to determine individuals’ feelings about discipline. The survey format design was similar to a Likert scale type survey. The teachers, parents, and students completed the survey to identify areas of need within the present discipline policy at the Charles L. Spragg School. This identification process addressed specific problems occurring within the present discipline system. The same survey will be given to the teachers and parents at the beginning of the next school year to identify changes that have occurred due to the new code of conduct. They will be asked if the new discipline procedures are effective, and are there still areas that need to be addressed and possibly adjusted. For this study effectiveness was defined as a comparison of frequency of referrals pre and post implementation of the code of conduct.

The quantitative part of the study was the amount of and severity of infractions reflected in the discipline referrals received before the implementation of the new code of conduct. This number was compared to the frequency and type of written referrals after the code was implemented. The development of the code of conduct began by reviewing previous year discipline referrals from school year 1999 and 2000 and categorizing them into the areas of both severity and frequency. Discipline referrals are forms that are completed by the teaching staff when it is deemed that administrative intervention is
necessary. This review recognized particular issues that needed to be addressed within the new code of conduct. The following are the issues that this intern deemed relevant when reviewing the referrals: engaging in unsafe behavior to self or others, pushing other students, fighting with others, defying authority, ignoring classroom or school rules, showing disrespect to others, and a catch all category identified as “other.” All of these areas were identified because of the frequency of occurrence with regard to severity.

The survey and the discipline referrals are the individual research instruments used within this study. The survey was distributed to all staff at the Charles L. Spragg School before the new code of conduct was developed. For this study, staff was defined as any adult member of the Spragg school community who has contact with the students.

Forty-four individuals make up the staff at the Spragg School. The intern along with the help of two building principals developed the survey used within this study. The survey’s purpose was to identify areas of the present discipline system and evaluate which are ineffective and which are working. The survey asked teachers and parents to rate their impressions of how the school dealt with discipline issues. The surveys were distributed to all teachers and staff of the C. L. S. School, a total number of 44 individuals. The parental input came from surveys that were sent home with all students of the school. The surveys were then used to determine attitudes of the community of the C. L. S. School toward discipline. The surveys revealed areas that needed to be addressed by the new code of conduct.

The second research instrument used in this study was the file of discipline referrals from the previous two years. The past referrals totaled 259 different incidents. The C. L. S. School had two different building principals that dealt with discipline
referrals for the years being examined by this study. These individuals were in charge of dealing with all aspects of the discipline referral. The referrals were followed by an investigation, evaluation, and resolution of each infraction. Each of the administrators had a different manner of dealing with those referrals. One of the administrators recorded his resolution of each referral, while the other administrator did not record any outcomes of the referral. The difference in the documentation of the actions on the referrals required this intern to organize them into large categories. When analyzing the data from the discipline referrals, this researcher classified them into areas of behaviors or infractions as reported by teachers in their written completion of the referrals and that reflected high numbers of recurrences and recidivism. The following were the categories used: engaging in unsafe behavior to self or others, pushing other students, fighting with others, defying authority, ignoring classroom or school rules, showing disrespect to others, and a catch-all category identified as “other.”

The location of this study was the Charles L. Spragg School, which had an enrollment of 353 students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grades. The school is part of a district that is categorized as a rural B school in New Jersey. The state of New Jersey uses a district factor grouping, which is a system that provides a means of ranking schools by their socio-economic status, to categorize the schools. These groupings allow comparison of districts with similar profiles for purposes of state aid and assessment information. The C. L. S. School population is characterized by a mobility rate of 31%. There is a 64% eligibility rate for free or reduced meals. The school employs, 33 teachers, 7 teacher aides, 4 support staff, and one building administrator. The present building principal has been in the position since September 2000.
The data collection from the pre survey was also used to identify teachers' feelings regarding discipline and the present system in place. The new code was implemented in October 2001. The number of discipline referrals for October, November, December, and January were compared to the number of referrals for the same time period from the previous year. Both the number of referrals and the type of referrals were analyzed for this study.
Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

The particular items for a discipline code at the Charles L. Spragg School were identified, codified, and written after attaining information from three different sources. In September 2001 the survey was sent to all parents who have students attending the C. L. S. School. The second source was information from a survey circulated to all staff at the C. L. S. School. The third source of information came from discipline referrals to the principal’s office.

The surveys were sent home with the students for the parents to fill out and return with their children. A total of 296 surveys were distributed, and 85 of them were returned. This is a 28% return rate for the purposes of this study. The survey asked 8 questions referring to a code of conduct. The initial survey provided this intern with both parental and staff insight into the present discipline policies and areas that needed improvement.

The Parents

The first survey question was to establish if a code of conduct should be utilized at the kindergarten through fourth grade levels. Figure 1 shows that parents responded evenly with 44% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing as to the necessity of a code of conduct. 1.2% disagreed and strongly disagreed that a code of conduct should be developed. Figure 2 explains that 46.4% of the parents strongly agreed that they should participate in the development of the code of conduct. 34.3% of the parents responded that they agreed, 3.6% disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagreed with being involved in the
development of a code of conduct. These two factors were helpful when establishing and implementing the code during the school year.

![Figure 1.](image1.png)  
Figure 1. A code of conduct should be established at the kindergarten through fourth grade.

![Figure 2.](image2.png)  
Figure 2. Parents and teachers should participate in the development of the code of conduct.

The next problem addressed was to identify the types of infractions referred and how they were handled by the administration. Parents agreed that the new code of conduct should be very prescriptive. Prescriptive for this study means that there is a cookbook type of consequences for all students. If they have a referral for disrespect, all of the students will be given the same consequence. Figure 3 shows 61.9% of the parents surveyed agreed the code of conduct should be very rigid, while 19% were neutral and 15.5% strongly agreed the code should be rigid. Figure 4 shows the parents disagreed that the code should only deal with major/severe infractions of the rules. 43.4% of parents responding to the survey disagreed that the code of conduct should only deal with major/severe infractions of rules. 25.3% were neutral, and 16.9% agreed that the code should only deal with major/severe infractions. 7.2% strongly agreed while 7.2% strongly disagreed that the code of conduct should deal with major/severe infractions.
Figure 5 shows that 45.2% of the parents who responded to the survey agreed that there was a clear and concise code of conduct currently in use within the Spragg School. 32.1% responded to being neutral, 11.9% strongly agreed, 8.3% disagreed and 1.2% strongly disagrees that there was a clear and concise code of conduct currently in use within the Spragg School. Figure 6 explains that 52.4% of the parents agreed that the students were aware of the rules and their consequences. 20.7% were neutral, and 13.4% strongly agreed while 9.8% disagreed and 3.7% strongly disagreed that students were aware of the rules.
Figure 7 reflects that 47.6% of the parents agreed that the children did receive consequences for their negative behaviors. 22.6% were neutral, 13.1% strongly agreed, and 13.1% disagreed that their children should receive consequences, and 2.4% strongly disagreed. However, the area of administrative prerogative was a vague area with unclear and inconsistent responses. This is explained in Figure 8 that 38.1% of the parents agreed that the code of conduct should allow for administrative prerogative. 34.5% of the parents were neutral, and 11.9% strongly agreed, and 11.9% disagreed that the code should allow for administrative prerogative. 1.2% strongly disagreed with administrative prerogative. This leads the intern to include within the development of the code of conduct the area of administrative prerogative and how to consistently and clearly define options open to the administration.

Figure 7. Figure 8.

The Staff

The survey was distributed to 44 staff members of the C. L. S. School. However, only 19 staff members responded giving the study a 47.5% return of the survey information.
Like the parents, the staff strongly agreed that there was a need for a code of conduct at the elementary level. 84% of the staff strongly agreed, along with 15.8% of the staff that agreed there needed to be a code of conduct as shown in Figure 1. 68.4% strongly agreed, and 26.3% agreed that parents should participate in the development of the code of conduct. 5.3% disagreed that parents and teachers should participate in the development of the code of conduct as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3 shows 52.6% of the staff agreed the code of conduct should be very prescriptive.15.8% strongly agreed while 31.6% were neutral about how prescriptive the code should be. 10.8% strongly agreed, 46.4% agreed, and 15.8% were neutral when responding to the question if students were presently aware of the rules and their consequences as shown in Figure 6. The teachers also disagreed that the code of conduct should only deal with major/severe infractions of the rules. 47.4% of the teachers were neutral, 36.8% disagreed, and 15.8% strongly disagreed that the code of conduct should just deal with major/severe infractions as shown in Figure 4.

All of these areas except allowing administrative prerogative and the fact the code was clear and concise elicited the same types of responses from both the parents and the staff of the C. L. S. School. The teachers disagreed with the parents’ perception that presently there was a clear and concise code of conduct within the school. 10.5% strongly agreed, 31.6% agreed, and 15.8% were neutral while 36.8% of the teachers disagreed, and 5.3% strongly disagreed that there is a clear and concise code of conduct, which is reflected in Figure 5. They disagreed that the code of conduct should allow for administrative prerogative. 10.5% strongly agreed, 26.3% agreed, and 26.3% were neutral while 36.8% disagreed with allowing the administration to have a prerogative
when dealing with discipline as shown in Figure 8. The teachers that disagreed with the fact that the school had a clear and concise code have been unaware of how the discipline referrals were handled by the administration or may have referred a student and the results of the referral were not shared with the individuals or may have not been to their liking. Those same teachers may have felt that dealing with all students the same way was advantageous to handling all discipline. 78.9% of the teachers strongly agreed that children received consequences for their negative behaviors, and 21.1% agreed with children receiving consequences for negative behavior as shown in Figure 7.

**Discipline Referrals**

The third method of data collection was a review of the actual discipline referrals that have been completed by the staff at the C. L. S. School. These included any students sent to the office for the purpose of disciplinary actions to be taken and the consequences that resulted. The initial review of referrals for both the 1999-2000, and 2000-2001 school year helped to develop large categories of discipline problems that needed to be addressed.

For the purpose of this study the years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 were selected as sources of data. The referrals from the months of October, November, December, and January were classified, and the results of those referrals were identified and compared. Table 1 shows the number of referrals pre implementation of the code of conduct and the action taken as far as the discipline referrals. Table 2 shows the same information post implementation of the new code of conduct.
During October 2000, there were 9 discipline referrals sent to the office. The referrals were categorized into the following: 3 for disrespect, 4 for hitting others, 1 for biting, and 1 for not following directions. However, none of these referrals resulted in suspensions. The consequences for these infractions were either identified as loss of lunch recess or not specified by the principal.
On the other hand during the month of October 2001, there were 20 referrals sent to the office. They were organized into the following categories: 8 for hitting others, 5 for disruptive behavior, 1 for biting, 4 for destroying school property, 1 for theft, and 1 for a weapon. The consequences for the referrals were: 4 suspensions, 7 parent-principal conferences, and 9 student-principal conferences.

November 2000 had a total of 9 discipline referrals, which were categorized into the following categories: 4 for hitting others, 1 for not following directions, 2 for disrespect, and 2 for sexual harassment. The consequences were identified as parent-principal conference, student-principal conference and the loss of recess.

The 5 November 2001 infractions were characterized into the following categories: 2 for hitting others, 2 for disruptive behavior, and 1 for breaking school rules. The consequences were 2 parent-principal conferences; a letter home and child study team referral, and 1 suspension.

In the month of December 2000, the C. L. S. School principal only had 4 discipline referrals, which were categorized into the following: 3 for hitting others, and 1 for disrespect. On the other hand, December 2001 was a very busy month for discipline referrals. There were a total of 21 referrals categorized into the following: 11 for hitting others, 4 for disrespect, 5 for not following school rules, and 1 for a weapon. The consequences for these referrals were the following: 8 suspensions, 5 parent-principal conferences, 6 student-principal conferences, and 1 loss of recess.

January 2001 included a total of 10 discipline referrals that were acted upon by the principal. They were categorized into the following: 6 for hitting others, 3 for disrespect, and 1 for a weapon. These referrals resulted in 2 parent conferences.
Data for January 2002 reflected 11 discipline referrals that were categorized into the following: 4 for rude/annoying behavior, 4 for disrespect, 1 for biting, and 1 for a weapon. The following consequences were identified: 2 suspensions, 5 parent-principal conferences, and 4 student-principal conferences.

The total discipline referrals for 2000-2001 were 32, which resulted in 1 suspension. The total number of discipline referrals for 2001-2002 was 57, which resulted in 15 suspensions.

What does this mean?

This intern reached the following conclusions when reviewing the parents’ responses to the survey. Parents believed that there should be a code of conduct in place for students in kindergarten through fourth grade. The parents wanted to be included in the development of the code of conduct. Parents agreed that the code of conduct should be rigid, that the students should receive consequences for their negative behaviors, and that the administration should have prerogative when dealing with students. The parents agreed that there was a clear and concise code of conduct currently in use with the Spragg School and agreed the students were presently aware of the rules and their consequences according to the initial survey. The parents disagreed that the code of conduct should only deal with major/severe infractions of the rules.

The second research instrument used was the discipline referrals. There were 32 total referrals for the specific months during the 2000-2001 school year, while there were 57 during the same time period during the 2001-2002 school year. The increase in discipline referrals can be caused by a few factors. The first is the fact that teachers now have a code of conduct and expected behaviors for the students and the consequences for
the behaviors. Teachers may have better communication with the administration since the implementation of the code of conduct.

All in all the discipline referrals have increased, but the consequences for those referrals are more clearly defined. This intern's expectations are that the referrals will continue to rise for the remainder of this school year, but will decrease the following year as students become aware of the new code of conduct.
The development and implementation of a student code of conduct had many areas that were addressed throughout this project. These will be discussed within the conclusion of this paper.

The first area explored was how the parents and teachers felt about the actual development of a code of conduct within the kindergarten to fourth grade. The different schools of thought regarding dealing with younger children's discipline did not become a part of this project. All parties involved recognized that a discipline code was important and needed at this age level. The project research instruments were parent/teacher surveys along with school discipline referrals.

The amount of returned surveys from both parent and teachers actually surprised this intern. The amount of parental involvement in the district had always been minimal. The young students were responsible for taking home and returning the surveys to their teachers, although, the amount of returned surveys was a pleasant surprise.

The intern hypothesized that the number of discipline referrals would decrease since students became aware of the actions taken because of the code of conduct regarding discipline issues. The implementation of a code of conduct would cause the students to think twice about their actions.

The development of the actual code of conduct was easy since all parties recognized the need for some type of document to deal with discipline. However, the number of discipline referrals increased from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002. The number of suspensions grew from 1 to 15 over the four months that referrals were being reviewed.
The increased number of discipline referrals could be caused by two major factors. The first factor addressed is the existence of an actual code of conduct that informs teachers as to what types of referrals needed to be sent to the office for administrative actions.

The second reason may be the fact the principal is entering the second year on the job and has evaluated the need for good discipline to help set the tone of the school. The study showed that discipline was being addressed, yet there was no decrease in the amount of discipline referrals. The study also clearly shows the principal was documenting the actions taken in regards to discipline referrals. This was a point that came out in the beginning of this study. Teachers, parents, and students became more involved in the discipline process once the code of conduct was implemented.

The importance of following the code of conduct will hopefully change the school environment along with preparing the students for middle school and high school. The students’ awareness of consequences for breaking the rules may help develop students’ self discipline. Self discipline is the ultimate behavioral goal of the district. The need for self discipline is also reflected in the social skills program in which the students are now involved.

The review of this information will help develop this intern’s leadership ability when dealing with students, parents, and teachers. The needs to set a standard for student behavior and to be consistent in its implementation are key abilities any leader must possess.

The changes that took place, at the Charles L. Spragg School may not be seen until next year. As teachers, students, and parents learn about and follow the code of conduct the amount of discipline referrals should decrease.
The need to continue monitoring the number of referrals sent to the office could be a reason for additional studies within the area of discipline. The more aware and better self disciplined the students become, the more the number of discipline referrals will decrease.
Reference List


Gaustad, Joan (1992). School Discipline. ERIC Digest, 78


Appendix A

Research Instrument
Parent Survey
Dear Parents,

Hello, my name is Carrieann L. Molnar. I am carrying out a survey for my Masters Degree in School Administration. The survey is on the subject of a code of conduct, a set of procedures used to deal with disruptive behavior for elementary schools.

I would appreciate it if you would complete the attached survey. Your participation is totally voluntary and neither your name nor any other identifying information will be recorded. Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Please complete the following but do not put your name on the survey.

Sex  [ ] Male     [ ] Female

Child in (Circle any grade you have children in)
Kindergarten   First   Second   Third   Fourth
Please circle the answer that most fits your feelings about a code of conduct.

1. Should there be a code of conduct at the kindergarten through fourth grade?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. Should the code of conduct be very prescriptive?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. Should the code of conduct allow for administrative prerogative?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. Presently, is there a clear and concise code of conduct within the school?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. Do you feel that the children receive consequences for their negative behaviors?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

6. Should parents participate in the development of the code of conduct?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

7. Should the code of conduct only deal with major/sever infractions of the rules?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

8. Are students presently aware of the rules and their consequences?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
Appendix B

Research Instrument
Teacher/Staff Survey
Hello, my name is Carrieann L. Molnar. I am carrying out a survey for my Masters Degree in School Administration. The survey is on the subject of a code of conduct, a set of procedures used to deal with disruptive behavior for elementary schools.

I would appreciate it if you would complete the attached survey. Your participation is totally voluntary and neither your name nor any other identifying information will be recorded. Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Please complete the following but do not put your name on the survey.

Sex  [] Male  [] Female

Number of years teaching. _____

Number of years teaching at the Charles L. Spragg School. _____

Thank you for your help.
Please circle the answer that most fits your feelings about a code of conduct.

1. A code of conduct should be established at the kindergarten through fourth grade.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. A code of conduct should be very rigid.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. A code of conduct should allow for administrative prerogative.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. There is a clear and concise code of conduct currently in use within the Spragg School.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. Children should receive consequences for their negative behaviors.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

6. Parents and teachers should participate in the development of the code of conduct.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

7. A code of conduct should only deal with major/sever infractions of the rules.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

8. Students are presently aware of the rules and their consequences.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
Appendix C

Research Instrument
Discipline Referral
EGG HARBOR CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
C. L. SPRAGG SCHOOL

BEHAVIOR REPORT

Date: ____________________
Class: ____________________

Student: ____________________
Teacher/Aide/Substitute: ____________________

A. Description of the Incident:

☐ Failure to Observe School Rules  ☐ Annoying to Classmates  ☐ Restless/Inattentive
☐ Destructive to School Property  ☐ Hitting Another Student  ☐ Excessive Talking/Loudness
☐ Running in Hall/Class  ☐ Rude/Discourteous  ☐ Late to Class
☐ Disrespectful to an Authority Figure  ☐ Other ____________________

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

As a result of the incident(s) described above, the following actions(s) has been taken to correct the student's behavior:

B. Corrective Action by the Teacher:

☐ Conference with Student  ☐ Teacher Detention
☐ Letter Home  ☐ Behavior Modification Plan
☐ Phone Call Home  ☐ Parent Conference
☐ Other: ____________________

☐ Conference with Principal
☐ Restricted Activities
☐ Parent Conference
☐ Suspension
☐ CST Referral
☐ Other

Dates

Principal's Comments: ____________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Principal's Signature ____________________

c: Parent, Teacher, Principal, Case Manager
Egg Harbor City Charles L. Spragg School
Code of Conduct

Range of Penalties: The following are details of the range of penalties listed on the code of conduct.
Detentions: Teacher detentions, office detentions (until 3:30 pm), the long detention (until 4:00 pm)
Suspensions: Out of school suspensions, suspensions from participation in events or activities.
Hearings: With Principal, The Superintendent, or the Board of Education.
Loss of Privileges: Students who continually violate school code of conduct may lose school privileges such as participation in filed trips and/or assemblies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Referral</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Corrective Action Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure to observe rules.</td>
<td>Spragg School general rules, travel rules, dining rules, morning arrival rules</td>
<td>1st Warning (Conference)</td>
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<td>2nd 5 minute time out</td>
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<td>3rd letter home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4th Sent to Principal</td>
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<td>Disrespect to authority figure.</td>
<td>Failure to follow the explicit direction of a staff member</td>
<td>Warning, Detention</td>
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<td>Sent to Principal, Parent Conference, Suspension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endangering safety of others</td>
<td>Instigating a fight/unhealthy action (Ex. Spitting)</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Parent Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late to school</td>
<td>Unexcused late to school</td>
<td>Four or greater detention</td>
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<td>Late to class without a valid pass</td>
<td>Teacher/Office detention</td>
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<td>Profanity</td>
<td>Profane statement or gestures</td>
<td>Warning, detention, principal conference, suspension</td>
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<td>Theft</td>
<td>Theft, possession or distribution of stolen property</td>
<td>Restitution, Suspension, Parent Conference, Police complaints may be filed.</td>
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<td>Weapons/Look alike</td>
<td>Possession of a potentially dangerous including toy/look a likes</td>
<td>Suspension, weapon, Parent Conference possible outside evaluation, possible home instruction pending Board hearing, police complaint may be filed.</td>
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<td>Disruptive Behavior/Horseplay</td>
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<td>Detention, Suspension</td>
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<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Behavior of this nature</td>
<td>Suspension, parent conference, possible home instruction pending Board hearing, possible police involvement.</td>
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<td>Fire Alarm</td>
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<td>Suspension, possible police involvement.</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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