

THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING AND ATTENDANCE CENTER:
IS IT EFFECTIVE IN A RURAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM?

by

Susan K. Martin

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The graduate college
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin
54751

ABSTRACT

<u>Martin</u>	<u>Susan</u>	<u>K.</u>
(Writer)	(Last name)	(First)
		(Initial)

Title: The Alternative Learning and Attendance Center: Is It Effective In A Rural High School System?

<u>Master of Science Degree with a Major in Education</u>	<u>Amy Gillett</u>
(graduate major)	(research advisor)

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM: This study was done to examine the instructor use of the ALAC room and its success in behavior modification in a rural high school system. The study investigated student assignments to the ALAC room and the influence the assignments had on their behavior when they returned to the classroom. The expected findings are teacher responses that will define the purpose and the value of the ALAC room in the future. Therefore the effectiveness of the ALAC room will be improved through the future use of the evaluations and results of the survey.

RESEARCH DESIGN: The research is of quantitative design. The subjects of this study are from a population of teachers at Bloomer High School that had the use of the ALAC room available to them. A cluster sampling technique was used.

The survey was developed by the researcher. The research study focused on the

following questions: How often is the ALAC room used by instructors? Is there a certain percentage of students that are repeat visitors? Is the ALAC room an effective tool for behavior modification?

FINDINGS: The findings are from 28 teachers that had the use of the ALAC room during the school year of 1998-1999. The frequency for the correction of disruptive student behavior were as follows: 77.3% (n=17) used the ALAC room to correct disruptive behavior 1 to 5 times. The less frequent responses occurred in the categories of 6 to 10 and 21 to 25 times. This information indicates that the ALAC room is meeting the goals for which it was intended. It was created to be a short term solution for problem students, as well as a center for instructional support.

CONCLUSIONS: The potential of the ALAC room is far reaching. The establishment of an ALAC room is just the beginning of a central concept of discipline with several alternatives for the student based upon the number of referrals and the number of staff that refer the same student.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CHAPTER I: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Research Questions	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Assumptions	6
Limitations	7
CHAPTER II: Literature Review	8
Introduction.	8
ALAC room.....	8
Criteria used for the ALAC room.....	13
Effectiveness of the ALAC room.....	20
CHAPTER III: Introduction.....	24
Research Questions.....	24
Description and Selection of Sample.....	24
Instrument.....	24
Procedure for Data Collection.....	25
Analysis of Results.....	25
Limitations.....	25
CHAPTER IV: Introduction.....	27
Research Question One.....	27
Research Question Two.....	27
Research Question Three.....	28
Research Question Four.....	28

Research Question Five.....	29
Research Question Six.....	29
Research Question Seven.....	29
Research Question Eight.....	29
Research Question Nine.....	.30
Research Question Ten.....	30
Research Question Eleven.....	30
Research Question Twelve.....	31
CHAPTER IV: Introduction.....	32
Conclusions.....	32
REFERENCES.....	35
APPENDICES	
Appendix A:	
A Survey On ALAC Effectiveness.....	39
Appendix B:	
Responses To Survey Question Nine.....	42
Appendix C:	
Responses To Survey Question Ten.....	44
Appendix D:	
Responses To Survey Question Eleven.....	46
Appendix E:	
Responses To Survey Question Twelve.....	48

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The researcher has always been interested in behavior modification. As classroom teachers we are continually searching for better methods to manage classroom behavior. When our high school staff and administration decided to change from an eight period day to a four period day, they also decided to adopt the concept of an ALAC room as a behavior modification tool. From its inception there was interest in the success of the concept and the application it would have for the students, administration, and individual instructors in their classrooms.

As an instructor the researcher was assigned a forty-five minute supervision duty in the ALAC room. Other instructors were also assigned as supervisors throughout the school day. This assignment was a unique opportunity to be involved in the use and success of this concept on two levels: first as a classroom instructor, and secondly as a supervisor of the students who were sent to the center. After using this method of behavior modification for two years at the Bloomer High School, the researcher wanted to know how often individual students were sent to the ALAC room, and if it made a difference in their classroom behavior. The researcher also wanted to know how fellow instructors used the ALAC room, and what they observed in student behavior before and after they were assigned to the ALAC room.

What is the ALAC room? The Alternative Learning and Attendance Center (ALAC room) is a new approach for behavior modification and supportive instruction for students at Bloomer High School. It was first put into use in the school year of 1997-1998, and again during 1998-1999. We will continue to use it as a part of our school system until the year 2,000.

The purpose of the ALAC room is three-fold. First, it is an area where students can be sent to get additional instruction or help with assignments if they are in need.

Students might also be assigned to the ALAC room if they have been absent and need help with their make-up class work. Secondly it is used as an attendance center. The third reason that students could be sent to the ALAC room would be for disruptive behavior in the classroom. The ALAC room concept was developed basically for administration and teacher use, but students can also use it if they feel they need to remove themselves from a potentially volatile situation in the classroom.

The ALAC room in the Bloomer High School setting is used primarily as an attendance center. The high school principal is the only authority that can assign students to the ALAC room for attendance infractions. Instructors can also use the ALAC room as a place to send students when they are disruptive in class.

When students are sent to the ALAC room for attendance infractions, it is usually because they have accumulated a pre-set number of detentions and have not cleared these detentions in after school sessions. Rather than give these students an out-of-school suspension, the ALAC room is used as an in-school suspension area.

Instructors use the ALAC room primarily as a discipline tool. If students are behavior problems in class they can be removed to the ALAC room for the remainder of the period, or if the principal and instructor feel it necessary they may be assigned for a longer period of time. This often results in an assignment of a detention. If the student does not serve the detention within a predetermined time limit, the detention assignment doubles and keeps on increasing until the student begins to serve them or until they reach a total of ten. At this point the student is assigned an in-school suspension (ISS) in the ALAC room for three days. Before the concept of the ALAC room was in place, the student would automatically be given an out-of-school suspension (OSS).

The ALAC room is staffed by instructors who are assigned there as a part of their out-of-classroom duties. There is a different instructor assigned to the ALAC room every forty-five minutes. The duty of the instructor while supervising the ALAC room is to

tutor students that need help in their assignments, administer tests, and keep the room quiet and orderly.

Prior to the use of the ALAC room, there was not an area to send students when they were disruptive in class. They would be sent to the main office of the school to sit in chairs and wait for the principal to address their particular problem. This was not a desirable situation, because while the students were waiting, they would interrupt the daily routine of the office and quite often change the atmosphere from positive to negative. The inception of the ALAC room began as a solution to this problem. With this need in mind as a starting point, the concept of the ALAC room evolved as a solution for a variety of problems in our system.

Although the attendance center is not the answer to all discipline problems, the research supports the use of an ALAC room (Chizak, 1984; Green & Barnes, 1993; Raebeck, 1993). It was evident when comparing the research of Kruse and Kruse (1995) with the evidence in Maxwell's (1987) study that students, parents, teachers, and administrators supported the method of in-school suspension (ISS) as well as the teacher assistance that the ALAC room offered. The Raebeck (1993) study found the most promising behavior modification method to use in conjunction with a four period schedule was the ALAC room. This form of discipline according to the Raebeck (1993) study was also supported by teachers as being the most efficient and successful. This program, a modified in-school suspension (ISS) program, time-out room, study room, and place where students went to cool off, worked on several levels simultaneously. In supporting the effectiveness of the alternative learning center, Raebeck (1993) noted that in-school suspension (ISS) was cut almost in half and out-of-school suspension (OSS) dropped considerably.

Numerous researchers (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989; Carruthers, 1993; Crone, Glascock, Franklin, & Kochan, 1993; Easton & Engelhard, 1982; Hatfield, 1994; Walberg, 1984, 1988) have documented the presence of a positive relationship between

attendance and academic success, with the number of student absences having a statistically significant effect on academic success regardless of the student's educational level.

Supporting research from several sources can be found to corroborate this information. According to Andrews and Taylor (1998) :

The statistically significant and meaningful relationship between attendance and achievement has encouraged researchers to examine the relationship of school suspension to school attendance and hence, to achievement. Suspensions in school (ISS) and out of school (OSS) remove students from regular classes where the benefits of teacher instruction are present. This missed instruction can result in academic problems for suspended students. For example, Costenbader and Markson (1994) found a strong relationship between suspension and dropping out, with the strength of that relationship differing by school size. That is schools with fewer than 500 students had 16-20% of dropouts with at least one suspension, whereas 46-50% of dropouts had been suspended one or more times in schools with a student population of 2,000 or more. In addition to academic problems experienced by suspended students, students also lose the support of peers, teachers, and support personnel, thereby increasing the possibility that the students will become dropouts. (p. 209)

With this supporting evidence, the ALAC room concept seems a viable answer to the student behavior modification we were looking for at Bloomer.

In conclusion, the ALAC room is a new approach that we are taking with behavior problems at Bloomer High School. It is the researchers goal to investigate the teacher use of the ALAC room and the relationship it has on classroom behavior.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the instructor use of the ALAC room and its success in behavior modification in the Bloomer High School. The study will investigate student assignments to the ALAC room and the influence the assignments have on their behavior when they return to the classroom.

The study will be based on information compiled from a survey given to the Bloomer High School instructors and their use of the ALAC room in that facility. The survey will be conducted during the fall term of the school year 1999-2000 at Bloomer High School and will include the responses of the twenty-eight instructors.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed to study the effectiveness of the ALAC room in a rural high school system. The research information of greatest concern was:

1. How often is the ALAC room used by instructors?
2. What criteria is used to send a student to the ALAC room?
3. What is the relationship between student behavior and assignment to the ALAC room?
4. Is there a certain percentage of students that are repeat visitors?
5. Is the ALAC room an effective tool for behavior modification?

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need to be defined.

ALAC room: ALAC room is an acronym for the words Alternative Learning and Attendance Center. This center used during the school day as an area where students can be sent for instructional help. It is also used as an attendance center that serves as an in-school suspension (ISS) area.

ISS: ISS is an acronym for the words in-school-suspension. This term is used for an area in a school where a student being disciplined is sent as a means of punishment in lieu of being sent home. A variety of components including instructional, counseling, and behavioral contracts can be integrated into the program.

OSS: OSS is an acronym for the words out-of-school suspension. This term is used for the act of sending a student home and out of the school building during the school day on a temporary basis as a means of punishment for disciplinary problems.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions which are apparent in this research. These are:

1. All of the instructors agreed to use the ALAC room concept.
2. All instructors would view the ALAC room as an effective discipline program.
3. All instructors assigned to supervise the ALAC room would follow the same discipline procedures.
4. All of the instructors would record student data during their assigned supervision of the ALAC room.
5. All of the data sheets from the ALAC room would be collected.

Limitations

Several limitations have been identified by the researcher. These are:

1. The research was completed at one school.
2. Not all weeks of the ALAC room were represented.
3. Instructors were not inserviced on the expectations of supervision in the ALAC room.
4. Not all of the instructors that utilized the ALAC room will be available to complete the survey.
5. The time lapse between the administration of the survey and the previous school year when the ALAC room was used. The survey will be based upon the past school year of 1998-1999, and therefore will in part rely upon the memory of the instructors to recall which students were assigned to the ALAC room.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will review the literature that is relevant and applies to the subject of the ALAC room. Specifically discussed will be how the ALAC room concept has been implemented in the Bloomer High School. Behavior modification and in-school suspension will be the focus as it applies to student assignment to the ALAC room.

Alternative Learning and Attendance Center (ALAC room)

Sheets (1996) reported that student accountability is a benchmark of an effective school discipline program. Our schools are a reflection of our society, we must have rules and regulations, a discipline policy to set the foundation of what is acceptable and appropriate student behavior. School administrators are responsible for enforcing the discipline policy. The in-school suspension policy that is developed for a school must be used as a behavior modification model and as a result will be a productive form of discipline for the school. It is within this framework of a discipline policy that the in-school suspension policy of the Bloomer High School was formed. It is the recommendation of Sheets (1996) that the in-school suspension policy developed for a school must be used as a behavior modification model and as a result will be a productive form of discipline for the school.

The ALAC room is an acronym for a concept that refers to a supervised in-school suspension and time out area used by teachers and administrators when removing students from the classroom. Student removal from the classroom can result for a number of reasons. Two of the most common reasons for uses in the Bloomer High School setting are for disruptive behavior in the classroom and in-school suspension. It can be, but is less frequently used for teacher aided study, or as an area to complete make-up-tests.

This study focuses on the use of the ALAC room as a behavior modification model for students assigned to in-school suspension, and time-out assignments to the ALAC room for disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Hartwig and Ruesch (1995), in their study of discipline, defined suspension:

A suspension is generally defined as a temporary cessation of educational services. State statutes regulate the allowable length of a suspension, the reasons for which a suspension can be ordered, and the procedure school officials must follow in implementing a suspension. Generally, state statutes allow students to make up certain work or take certain tests which were missed during periods of suspension. In most states, a suspension has a maximum duration of three to fifteen school days.

(p. 15)

Ramsey (1994) gave us food for thought on suspension in light of the school violence that has taken place in this past summer of 1999. He stated that with the banning of corporal punishment and the increase of serious student offenses involving weapons and violence, suspension and expulsion are playing a new role in student discipline. Many schools which hadn't expelled a student in 20 years now regularly expel some students each year for possession or use of a weapon (Ramsey, 1994).

Suspension and expulsion have always been acts of last resort in school discipline, but today's crisis mentality and fears about student safety cause administrators to move to the bottom line more frequently. There are situations in today's society where certain students must be removed from the school setting in order to preserve a safe and workable learning environment (Ramsey, 1994).

Sweeney-Rader, Snyder, Goldstein, and Rosenwald (1980) gave insight to the development of an in-school suspension program that was developed in their school in the late nineteen-seventies. Even back then out-of-school suspension was considered an admission of failure in the treatment of the student involved. They pointed that the out-

of-school suspension not only failed to contribute to changing a student's behavior, but in fact, encouraged a student to act out negatively. That is to say they were free to cause problems in the neighborhood and to turn to drugs and alcohol. In addition, the opportunity for diagnostic evaluation of a student's problems was lessened and parents' responsibility diminished through suspension. With this in mind the goal to install an in-school suspension program was a priority. Based on a prevention model, the in-school suspension program was designed to discipline students on the school premises rather than to reward them with a vacation in an out-of-school suspension assignment (Sweeney-Rader, Snyder, Goldstein, & Rosenwald, 1980).

According to Grossnickle and Sesko (1994), an in-school suspension program is an effective method for dealing with disruptive students. Before a student is assigned to in-school suspension, a parent conference sets the stage for building a cooperative relationship between students, parents, and the school. The time away from classes makes clear to the students that if they wish to be members of the school community, they must earn their way back in.

Hartwig and Ruesch (1995) stated that helping the student, identifying, and treating the cause of the problem should be the basis of the disciplinary action taken with a student. The primary goal of in-school suspension programs should be to exclude the problem student from the regular classroom while continuing to help the student academically. The goal of the program should be that of behavior modification so that future violations aren't an occurrence.

Hartwig and Ruesch (1994) found in their study that the time-out concept was an effective behavior modification and could be used in conjunction with the in-school suspension concept as a measure to be taken for disruptive behavior in the classroom. This time-out concept could also be used as a step leading up to in-school suspension.

During time-out the student is isolated within the school setting. The provision of isolation is based on the concept that removing a student from the classroom environment

will provide the opportunity for the reduction of aggressive or off-task behaviors. Although time-out might be perceived as a restrictive disciplinary procedure, the primary conceptual framework of time-out is actually based on its implementation as a therapeutic approach designed to help reduce the student's anxiety levels while improving the opportunity for improving skill levels. The key to the use of time-out is the removal of the student from the environment that is stimulating or encouraging misbehavior, while at the same time allowing the student the opportunity to be in a different environment that is less distracting and essentially free from stimulating variables (Hartwig & Ruesch, 1994).

Few students come to school without problems, and no school succeeds in helping students grow without addressing their problems. Dealing with student behavior is part of our roles as educators. Discipline is hard work, but creative discipline that fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership reaps long-term benefits (Krajewski, Denham-Martinek, & Polka, 1998).

Andrews and Taylor (1998) found that to combat some of the problems of out-of-school suspension, including students being away from instruction and unsupervised during the day at home, most schools have instituted some form of in-school suspension. This type of suspension differs from out-of-school suspension in that students are supervised and students are expected to complete school assignments.

Andrews and Taylor (1998) reported that further information indicates few alternative discipline programs have been discussed in the literature. In more recently developed programs, another alternative to detention and suspension that may be considered as positive and rehabilitative in nature was the concept of an ALAC room. This program, a modified in-school suspension program, time-out room, study room, and place where students voluntarily went to cool off, worked on several levels simultaneously. At any given time there could be several objectives and tasks for the supervisor to maintain with a variety of students. This approach was determined to be a far better approach than out-of-school suspension. According to this study the

suspensions in-school and out dropped significantly after this method of in-school suspension was put into place (Andrews & Taylor, 1998).

Hartwig and Ruesch (1994) related that the concept of time-out has proven to be both a popular and an effective method of suppressing inappropriate behavior. It has been used successfully across a variety of behavioral problems, situations, and populations. Time-out can be used in the regular classroom environment, or depending on the situation, in a classroom or small facility in the building for a cooling-off period. Care must be taken to ensure that the approach does not discriminate against students in the way in which the time-out procedure is used.

Time-out is not a suspension from services; rather it is isolation for a limited period of time during the school day with minimal impact on the educational process.

Criteria used for the Alternative Learning and Attendance Center

(ALAC room)

Short, Short, and Blanton (1994) suggested that this information should be addressed when schools are implementing in-school suspension:

Critical Questions Schools Should Ask About In-School

Suspension:

1. What does the school want the use of in-school suspension to accomplish?
2. Does the school have a total school discipline program?
3. What are the prevailing teacher perceptions and philosophies in the school?
4. Are schools attempting to identify the reasons for rules infractions and misbehaviors?
5. Where are the positive reinforcers in the discipline program?
6. Students who get into trouble in schools are not all alike. Would schools be more successful in changing student behaviors if they

decided to deal with only one group--in particular, the most troublesome group of disrupters--by using in-school suspension and developing other strategies for eradicating the class skipping, truancy, tardiness, and all other nonviolent disruption acts?

7. Is the standard practice of referring students for a specified period of time to in-school suspension contributing anything significant in changing the "passive waiting out" of time?

8. Does the school use a valid measure of effectiveness in evaluating the in-school suspension program? (p. 24-25)

Dealing with school discipline problems has always been difficult. There are no easy solutions. The students who break rules, disrupt class, and assault others are complex, as are the solutions to changing their behavior (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994).

Sheets (1996) reported that student accountability is a benchmark of an effective school discipline program. Our schools are a reflection of our society, we must have rules and regulations, a discipline policy to set the foundation of what is acceptable and appropriate student behavior. School administrators are responsible for enforcing the discipline policy. The in-school suspension policy that is developed for a school must be used as a behavior modification model and as a result will be a productive form of discipline for the school.

Herfindahl (1996) reported in her study that the problem of a continual display of misbehavior by the same students and an increase of student infractions during the school day were impeding the progress of learning in a negative way for the whole school. The administrators and staff reported that those same students were endangering the safety and welfare of the entire student body. A solution was needed. Novell (1994) in her research has discovered an answer for this problem. She conducted a study utilizing a fifteen day in-school suspension program. This program was designed to reduce the

increasing number of principal-initiated student suspensions resulting from inappropriate conduct. The program components included a teacher in charge, parental involvement, pre-interviews, use of contracts, structure, and guidance curriculum. Students were able to reduce their in-school suspension time based on a point system. Novell found that cooperative students whose parents put forth effort to support and encourage their children on a daily basis while they were involved in this program benefited the most. Novell concluded that an in-school suspension program is effective for specific students when the program includes structured components like those mentioned in her study.

Killion (1998) stated in his research that secondary school administrators must be on the lookout for effective practices that decrease student discipline problems and increase student achievement. In many cases, general problems such as low self-esteem, low grades, and high dropout rates can be traced to haphazard or weak educational and discipline practices. Discipline practices that have proven to be effective are vital tools for teachers and administrators. From grade school to high school, knowledge of effective discipline practices is key to the success and productivity of any school. Using effective discipline practices gives administrators a greater chance of decreasing student discipline problems and improving student achievement (Killion, 1998).

What then, are the best choices for effective discipline practices that our judicial system will support?

Research by Stelzer and Banthin (1982) reported support from our judicial system for the use of these discipline restrictions and punishments:

The courts have supported: (1) criticism of students, (2) detention and in-suspension, (3) corporal punishment (4) physical control or restraint, (5) grade reduction, (6) suspension from extracurricular activity, (7) suspension from, school, (8) transfer, and (9) expulsion. In addition the courts have recognized that the need to maintain order and safety in the schools may justify the search of student lockers and, under some circumstances, their persons. (p. 122)

In the 1970's in-school suspension became a popular alternative to suspension or expulsion. School officials allowed students to remain in the school, but took away normal opportunities for physical mobility and social interaction. Under the supervision of an instructor, the students were encouraged to complete assigned lessons. Thus, in-school suspension satisfied the goals of both discipline and education (Stelzer & Banthin, 1982).

In-school suspension falls with-in the authority of the school to assign students to programs or classes. It raises no constitutional issues because the student remains in school and is not deprived of any educational benefits.

Ogilvy (1994) found that there is a feeling among many teachers that their power to deal with pupil discipline has been eroded with the abolition of corporal punishment, which was never replaced by any single sanction.

The traditional approach to behavior problems in secondary schools has therefore been reactive and largely negative. However, attempts have been made recently to move away from this crisis-management orientation towards a more positive preventive approach. This change in emphasis has arisen from the dual recognition that the old methods are not effective and that schools themselves are an important influence in the generation of pupil disruption (Ogilvy, 1994).

Lawrence and Kent-Olvey (1994) found that out-of school suspension is appropriate only when a student needs to 'cool off' or is a danger to other students.

According to Sheets (1996) research supports the need for an in-school suspension program:

Why does a school need an in-school suspension program? This type of discipline satisfies three important criteria:

- The program attempts to modify student misbehavior
- The assignment protects the overall learning environment by isolating disruptive students

-The suspension protects the community by keeping the offending students off the streets. (p. 87)

Short, Short, and Blanton (1994) reported in a study that analyzed national level data gathered for the Safe School Study included a number of relationships that were explored to discover whether certain variables with the school organization influenced suspension of students. Suspension rates could best be predicted by knowing the kind of school a student went to and knowing how that school was run (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). This research suggests that critical variables are teacher judgments and attitudes, school management and student governance practices, and racial socioeconomic, and academic bias present in the school. In essence, the study suggested that, in addition to their behaviors, students' chances of being suspended increased if:

- Teachers are seen by students as relatively uninterested in them
- Teachers believe that students are incapable of solving problems
- Disciplinary matters are handled largely by administrative rules
- The school is not able to provide consistent and fair governance
- There is a relatively high degree of academic bias among school personnel
- There is a relatively high degree of racial bias present in the school. (p. 14)

Grossnickle and Sesko (1994) stated that schools must establish a "technology" of discipline procedures. These procedures or components use proven techniques to address discipline problems. A school must develop a written discipline philosophy that serves as the foundation upon which all disciplinary sanctions are based. The philosophy should be written, with input from all members of the school staff.

The student handbook should be distributed to all students and their parents. The handbook should include all school rules and procedures, a description of the

consequences for misbehavior, and the student code of conduct detailing how a student is expected to behave and describing the benefits of a well-disciplined school.

The introduction of the ALAC room to the Bloomer High School system was initiated when the school implemented a change from an eight period day to a four period day. The teachers and administration were looking for a different approach to behavior modification in our school, and the ALAC room was the model that fit best with our new schedule.

In an interview with Brent Ashland, the principal at Bloomer High School, the purpose of the ALAC room in the Bloomer system was made clear. Mr. Ashland said:

The ALAC room is an in-school suspension area, and time out area that is the foundation of the discipline policy in the Bloomer High School. The supervised atmosphere the ALAC room gives to the student that is assigned in-school suspension is far superior to the out-of-school suspension of the past. Suspension of a student from the Bloomer High School is the result of a Step System that is described in a student handbook that was specifically developed for Bloomer High School. I developed the Bloomer High School Step System through research of its use in other districts. Each year I revise it to better fit our system here at Bloomer. (B. Ashland, personal communication, June 18, 1999)

The handbook is distributed to all students at the beginning of each school year. The hand book Step System for the ALAC room is explained by teachers in the classroom setting the first week of the school year so that all students understand the system and are accountable for their behavior in school.

According to the Bloomer High School Parent and Student Handbook, the description of the Step System and the steps are as follows. The Step System: When corrective actions taken by the classroom teacher have failed or the rule infraction is of a serious nature, the incident shall be referred to the principal for investigation and action. A student who is referred for violation of a rule contained within this code will be placed

at step 1. With each successive referral the student will be advanced up the step system at least one step. The disciplinary consequences for each step are as follows:

STEP 1 Detention(s)

STEP 2 Detention(s)

STEP 3 Detention(s)

STEP 4 One (1) day suspension.

STEP 5 Two (2) day suspension.

STEP 6 Three (3) day suspension.

STEP 7 Three (3) day out-of-school suspension (mandatory).

STEP 8 Expulsion hearing before the Board of Education.

(Ashland, 1998)

In general terms suspension is defined as removing a student from the school both socially and educationally for a temporary allotted time. This is a statement that refers to the standard out-of-school suspension that was the logical progression of discipline before the ALAC room was implemented in the Bloomer High School. The in-school suspension option that the ALAC room offers gave the added benefit of student accountability for the assigned time of a suspension. When students were assigned a suspension prior to the ALAC room the suspension was served out-of-school and there was no accountability for the time allotted to the suspension. Students now have to sit in a supervised room with a teacher for the allotted time of their assigned suspension instead of the unsupervised out-of-school suspension that was past practice.

The policies that are in effect in the Bloomer High School reflect this definition. With the Step System in place the students know what they are accountable for and how a suspension, if imposed, will impact on them.

Kettle and Meares (1976) found that an in school suspension program was beneficial to students because, since the students remained in school, they were available

to the supportive services personnel who could help them solve the problems which resulted in the suspension in the first place.

A study by Grossnickle and Sesko (1994) stated that the primary advantage of in-school suspension is that it still fulfills the main objective of out-of-school suspension, social isolation, while affording students the opportunity to keep up with school work. Ideally, in-school suspension is more than just a quiet study hall; it is a program that gives students an opportunity to complete assignments given by their teachers.

Effectiveness of the Alternative Learning and Attendance Center
(ALAC room)

Short, Short, and Blanton (1994) informed us in their research that the crucial key to an effective total school discipline program is shared values among students, teachers, parents, and administrators about what is acceptable, appropriate behavior in the particular school setting. We have found that several organizational characteristics relate to climates that are conducive to good student behavior. These characteristics include having a commitment to a plan of action, attention to teacher and principal role, and indication of strong student involvement (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994).

Grossnickle and Sesko (1994) related their research on putting a stop to discipline problems :

When students and staff members were asked what happens to students who are sent to the office, the following responses were given:

Teacher: "They're disciplined and helped."

Student: "They yell at you."

Teacher: "They get what is coming to them."

Student: "We get punished."

Teacher "Rules are enforced and penalties given."

Student: "I don't know, but it is usually bad."

Teacher: "They have done something wrong; they should get justice tempered with mercy."(p. 39)

Grossnickle and Sesko (1994) reported that from an administrator's viewpoint, the discipline office is more than a place where penalties are doled out-----it is more like a hospital emergency room.

The role of the disciplinarian requires enough flexibility to follow board policy and administrative guidelines and exercise administrative discretion. The disciplinarian is supposed to enforce the rules; however, rarely is he or she provided with specific procedures to accomplish the task (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1994).

According to Sheets (1996), the effective in-school suspension model must have an evaluative phase. Too many times this factor of a successful program is ignored. The operational components become so demanding and time-consuming that little energy is left for self evaluation.

To be effective, the evaluation component must measure student behavioral change over time and determine if the objectives of the program are being accomplished. Written evaluation forms with areas for suggestions should be distributed to all staff, and students involved with the model. Accurate record keeping and monitoring of students behavior after their stay in the in-school suspension program is essential. The individualized model will track the progress of students as they proceed during the school year. The use of successful follow-up strategies is suggested (Sheets, 1996).

Knopf (1991) stated that studies seeking to determine the effectiveness of in-school suspension programs generally have shown them to be successful in reducing the number of out-of- school suspensions and to have had strong support from administrators and parents. However, many in- school suspension programs were not meeting their full potential in all respects.

Williams (1998) stated that effective plans get to the root cause of student misconduct. They answered important questions, such as:

What code of behavior is expected?

What set of values should students exemplify?

They respond with specific measures, such as:

All students will learn to resolve conflicts in socially acceptable ways and without violence.

No student or outsider will be permitted to intimidate or disrupt the work of others. (p. 40)

Whatever its design, an effective discipline plan should inspire a climate in which all students take responsibility for their own behavior, treat each other with kindness and respect, and learn the value of productive work and good citizenship.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will address specific research questions, a description and selection of the subjects, development of an actual survey instrument, procedures for data collection, the unknowns, and limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The research study focused on the following questions: How often is the ALAC Room used by instructors? What criteria is used to send a student to the ALAC room? What is the relationship between student behavior and assignment to the ALAC room? Is there a certain percentage of students that are repeat visitors? Is the ALAC room an effective tool for behavior modification?

Description and Selection of Sample

The subjects of this study were from a population of teachers at Bloomer High School that had the use of the ALAC room available to them. A cluster sampling technique was used. The number of teachers at the Bloomer High School currently available to participate in the survey is 28.

Instrument

The survey was developed by the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the use of the ALAC room at the Bloomer High School.

Questions # 1 and # 2 dealt with the subjects' use of the ALAC room. Questions # 3 and # 4 consisted of a Likert scale used to determine the frequency and category of use of the ALAC room. Questions # 5 through #11 were short answer questions that requested information to determine the effectiveness of the use of the ALAC room.

Question # 12 was a request for suggestions on improvement of the use of the ALAC room.

This survey was developed by the researcher and was believed to be valid within its context. It measures the information it was intended to measure. This instrument is too new to have tests of reliability and validity run on it. A copy of the finalized survey is located in Appendix A.

Procedure for Data Collection

The data for this study was collected during the fall semester of the 1999-2000 school year. During a teachers' meeting, the researcher was given permission by the administration to introduce the survey and its content, and purpose. Voluntary participation was requested to complete the survey. When the presentation is completed, the survey was distributed to all of the teachers at Bloomer High School. When the surveys were completed, they were placed in a box located in the Bloomer High School office, and after the allotted one week completion time, they were collected by the researcher.

Results of the study were shared with the Bloomer High School administration.

Analysis of Results

The data collected from the "Survey On ALAC Effectiveness" was analyzed in the following manner. The statistical analysis of the hypothesis was covered in the first seven questions of the survey. The results were recorded in percentages. All remaining questions in the survey were subjective and were analyzed according to themes or commonalties.

Limitations

The subject selection was limited to the teachers that used the ALAC room. The students were not asked to participate. The subjects were asked to recall student assignment to the ALAC room which would not be as reliable as documented records. There is no set criteria for student assignment to the ALAC room. Voluntary completion of the survey limits the number of returns.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the instructor use of the ALAC room and its success in behavior modification in the Bloomer High School. This chapter contains a discussion of the results of the research compiled from a survey given to the Bloomer High School instructors concerning their use of the ALAC room at the Bloomer High School.

Research Question One

Have you ever used the ALAC room?

Of the twenty-eight teachers that participated in the survey, twenty-four used the ALAC room. This indicates that 85.7% of the faculty surveyed used the ALAC room as a part of their approach to alternative learning or discipline.

Research Question Two

If you have used the ALAC room, how did you use it?

Of the twenty-eight teachers surveyed, twenty-four responded. Of the responses given 37.5% used the ALAC room for disruptive behavior, 8.3% used it for test-taking, 37.5% used it for disruptive behavior and test-taking, 8.3% used it for other combinations or reasons. Of the twenty-eight responses, four did not use the ALAC room, which accounts for 14.3%. Disruptive behavior and test-taking were the most frequent reasons stated, therefore a direct relationship can be drawn between the need for an alternative for disciplining disruptive students with an alternative test-taking area and the high percentage of teacher use.

Research Question Three

If you used the ALAC room for correction of disruptive student behavior during the school year of 1998-99, how many times did you use it?

There were twenty-two valid cases out of the twenty-eight that were surveyed for this question. Of those surveyed, 77.3% (n=17) used the ALAC room from 1 to 5 times. The less frequent responses occurred in the categories of 6 to 10 and 21 to 25 times. They accounted for all other valid cases (21.6%). The frequency of these categories were as follows: 1 at 6 to 10 times (4.5%), 2 at 11 to 15 times (9.1%), 1 at 16 to 20 times (4.5%), and 1 at 21 to 25 times (4.5%). This information indicates that the ALAC room is meeting the goals for which it was intended. It was created to be a short term solution for problem students, as well as a center for instructional support.

Research Question Four

If you used the ALAC room for correction of disruptive student behavior during the school year of 1998-99, how many times did you use it?

There were thirteen valid cases and fifteen missing cases for this question on the survey. Of the thirteen valid cases, 46.2% used the ALAC room 1-5 times, 30.8% used it 6-10 times, and 23.1% used it 16-20 times. The results indicate that the ALAC room was used on a limited basis for test taking.

Research Question Five

Did you repeat assignments to the ALAC room?

The survey results for this question were as follows, out of 23 valid cases, 69.6% gave repeat assignments, while 30.4% did not.

Research Question Six

How many average number of times did a student repeat?

Results for this question show that out of sixteen valid cases, 87.5% used the ALAC room 1 to 5 times, and 12.5% used it 6 to 10 times.

Research Question Seven

In your view, how effective is the ALAC room?

There were twenty-three valid cases in this response, and of the twenty-three, 4.3% answered "not effective," 65.2% answered "somewhat effective," 26.1% answered "effective," and 4.3% answered "very effective." The mean of 2.3 represents a response of "somewhat effective" as a judgment of the ALAC room.

Research Question Eight

Compared to previous out-of-school suspension, does the in-school suspension have more success in your opinion?

Sixteen indicated that it was more successful than an out-of-school suspension. Several respondents clarified their answers. Some examples of their responses were as follows. "My problem with suspension is that a student who misses class for any reason in a four-period day is going to be hurt educationally." "They can't go fishing." "I have not used the room personally, however, I do hear comments from students and I hear them "laugh" about it...coming to school and doing "nothing".....at least they are in school!"

Research Question Nine

What is your perception of the problems with ALAC room assignments?

One of the recurring themes that was a concern of many respondents was the lack of consistency in rule enforcement by faculty in charge of the ALAC room. Another common response from teachers was that students didn't view the ALAC room as a punishment, but preferred to go there rather than sit in the classroom.

For more individual responses to this question see Appendix B.

Research Question Ten

What is your perception of the benefits of the ALAC room?

The removal of the disruptive student from the classroom was a benefit that most teachers gave as an answer to this question. Their reasons were varied but most said that

removing a disruptive student from the classroom gave the student time to cool down and kept the learning environment positive.

For more individual responses to this question see Appendix C.

Research Question Eleven

Why would you refer students to the ALAC room?

Disruptive behavior was the answer that was given in most of the responses to this question.

For more individual responses to this question see Appendix D.

Research Question Twelve

If you have any suggestions for improving the ALAC room, please indicate in the remaining space.

The recommendation that several of the teachers cited was the need for a consistent approach by all who supervised the ALAC room. Twelve of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

For more individual responses to this question see Appendix E.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The literature review conducted for this research on the ALAC room gave the researcher several insights into the nature of an effective in-school suspension policy. It was the intent to use this information to research the effectiveness of the ALAC room in the Bloomer High School in the survey given to the teachers that were employed at this school. As a result of this survey several recommendations were reported. In this chapter the reader will find those recommendations as well as a summary of the recommendations that the literature pointed to as effective for in-school suspension.

Conclusions

The potential of the ALAC room is far reaching. The establishment of an ALAC room is just the beginning of a central concept of discipline with several alternatives for the student based upon the number of referrals and the number of staff that refer the same student.

It is recommended that referrals should be channeled into three different areas: discipline, guidance, and instructional help. These three components could be used individually or in combinations to an approach that would start with predetermined standard solutions for the student to choose from. If the problem persisted, and referrals continued, the solution should be individualized to fit the child's needs. A guidance session should be required if the student reached a set number of referrals. With the input of the guidance counselor, the student and the ALAC room supervisor can individualize an effective plan for that student.

The emphasis should be on the responsibility of the student to make the situation right. In other words, the student must earn the privilege to go back to the classroom. This privilege can be earned in several ways, but the decision of what to do to earn their way back should be the responsibility of the student.

The set of choices that the student would have to pick from could be a physical or an academic plan or a combination of both. For example, if the student was assigned to the ALAC room for disruptive behavior, he could choose to run a mile or learn a predetermined academic exercise that would be a universal skill which could be applied to any area of the curriculum. These tasks would be completed with a predetermined level of accuracy before he was allowed to go back to class. This is an oversimplified example, but it points to the need for a prepared plan that the student will look at and use to make a choice to value classroom learning more than time spent in the ALAC room. Therefore the time spent in the ALAC room will be less desirable than the time spent in the classroom.

There were several recommendations that teachers in the survey gave as insights to improvement of the ALAC room. Several said that the time spent in the ALAC room was like baby-sitting. The time spent there was non-productive and resulted in a holding area for students rather than an exercise in behavior modification.

A recommendation that many teachers gave in the survey was a need for consistency in the supervision of the ALAC room. One of the recommendations for a solution would be the implementation of an inservice for all teachers on the use of the ALAC room as well as the administration of the rules while supervising the ALAC room. This would provide all teachers with a common reference for the purpose and use of the ALAC room and also a unified approach to the administration of the rules and procedures for this area. The problem of consistency could also be solved through the addition of an employee hired for the supervision of the ALAC room.

Another recommendation that surfaced in the survey was the elimination of the lunch hour for students that are assigned to the ALAC room. The students would have their lunch delivered to them and they would be allowed a bathroom break but would not be allowed to leave for the lunch hour. The literature that was reviewed for this research supports this recommendation and states that the effectiveness of the ALAC room is greatly increased with the addition of this restriction.

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APPENDIX A

A SURVEY ON ALAC EFFECTIVENESS

developed
by
Susan Martin

This survey addresses the use of the ALAC room in the Bloomer High School. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. Have you ever used the ALAC room? Circle one.

YES

NO (skip to question #8)

2. If you have used the ALAC room, how did you use it? (Check all that apply.)

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
 TEST-TAKING/WORKSHEETS
 OTHER -- PLEASE SPECIFY _____

3. If you used the ALAC room for correction of disruptive student behavior during the school year of 1998-99, how many times did you use it? Circle one.

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-35

4. If you used the ALAC room for test-taking or worksheets, how many times did you use it? Circle one.

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-35

5. Did you repeat assignments to the ALAC room? Circle one.

YES

NO (Skip to question #7)

TURN PAGE

6. How many average number of times did a student repeat? Circle one.
- 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-35
7. In your view, how effective is the ALAC ROOM? Circle one.
- not effective somewhat effective effective very effective
8. Compared to previous out-of-school suspension, does the in-school suspension have more success in your opinion?
9. What is your perception of the problems with ALAC room assignments?
10. What is your perception of the benefits of the ALAC room?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX B

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTION NINE

Research Question Nine

What is your perception of the problems with ALAC room assignments?

Responses are not listed in any given order.

Freedom. They don't have work to do and can leave for lunch

Used for some purposes that do not apply

The students actually getting to the room. It may be too "easy" to send a student out instead of trying to work with them and solve the problem

Kids sleeping , kids sent for not dressing for Phy Ed--Kids who would rather be in ALAC.

Students without supervision and not a real consequence--more desirable to be in ALAC than class--disruptive students with test-takers.

Kids going there for frivolous reasons (not having gym clothes).

Some teachers may be tempted to use ALAC room in lieu of disciplining in classroom.

Students who are sent there repeatedly do not find it as a negative.

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTION TEN

Research Question Ten

What is your perception of the benefits of the ALAC room?

Responses are not listed in any given order.

For some kids I think it is a deterrent, for others they could care less.

If students know their parents will be contacted, they usually don't care for it and behavior changes.

Quick, easy.

Allows student-teacher to avoid an explosive situation--
no further disruption.

Immediate removal to watch paint dry.

Allows students a chance to cool down. Removes students
from a negative environment.

Place for students to make up tests.

If used for learning -OK- not for discipline.

Used as a "valve" release- temporary relief.

Better place than sitting in office.

It provides a place for an upset or disruptive student to go to
for a cooling down period. In addition, a teacher might be
able to continue teaching after a disruptive student has left
his or her room.

APPENDIX D

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTION ELEVEN

Research Question Eleven

Why would you refer students to the ALAC room?

Responses are not listed in any given order.

Only place to put students.

Extreme disruption.

Test-taking or if they are unable to behave in room.

Disruptive behavior.

Make-up.

Out of control

Behavior is beyond what can be tolerated in the classroom because it detracts from the learning of others.....Also, to have a quiet place for students to do make-up work or tests.

It would be an attempt on my part to provide an environment that was conducive to learning.

Can't conduct class due to their behavior.

If they were out of my control, or continue to take teaching time away from others.....because of their behavior.

APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTION TWELVE

Research Question Twelve

If you have any suggestions for improving the ALAC room, please indicate in the remaining space.

Responses are not listed in any given order.

I believe it works very well for it's purpose but it is a necessary evil.

Keep kids, who are in there because they are disruptive, in during LUNCH (that is the punishment part!) Keep door closed to room (can they put a blind on the door?).

Place it in the principal's inner office.

Consistent policy by all.

Suggestions made for this year seem to be helpful.

I believe that there should be steps in ALAC room as well so students are punished more for each incident.