

ABSTRACT

Sandra L. Arteaga, A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCIPLINE AS IT RELATES TO A LOW PERFORMING ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA (Under the direction of Dr. William Grobe) Department of Educational Leadership, March, 2015.

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina. The following topics and subtopics will be addressed in this research: at-risk, alternative learning programs/schools, high school completion, seat time, virtual learning, approaches to course credits, attendance/absences, suspension, dropouts, summary and findings, credit by mastery, results and recommendations and conclusion. The researcher addressed the following research question: What factors influence the implementation of discipline at the alternative school in Southeast North Carolina?

A program evaluation with descriptive statistics was used as the methodology. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used to gain insight into academic alternative school that serves non-traditional students. The intent of the research was to identify the factors that influence the implementation of discipline. Qualitative research encompassed surveys and an open-ended structural questionnaire were utilized to conduct this study. Quantitative research included descriptive statistics and compilation of the data collected from the survey results. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the study.

Key factors that were identified in order to improve the implementation of discipline subsequently positively impacting academic achievement in the school in Southeastern North Carolina were: establishing a clear mission, creating a positive culture and climate, instituting a coherent discipline model, increasing parent and community involvement, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, and providing targeted professional development.

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCIPLINE AS IT RELATES TO A LOW PERFORMING
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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by

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Chapters 1-3 were written in cooperation with my colleagues:
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Jerry Arteaga, for always encouraging and believing in me. And for always being my biggest supporter. My life would not be complete without you. I am so proud of you for your accomplishments and that you are my husband and best friend.

It is also dedicated to my parents, Al and Ruth Schmidt. They have shown me unconditional love and support. They embedded in me a love for learning, a confidence in my abilities, and the importance of working hard at whatever I did. Their selflessness changed my life and has helped me become who I am today.

I would also like to dedicate it to my Southern parents, James and Mallie Monroe. Even though I was not born to them, they have always made me feel loved and special. Their positive words, kindness, and undying support has impacted me forever and I am lucky to have been blessed enough to have them in my life.

Lastly, to my sister Sherri, we have been through highs and lows together always by each other's side. I am glad you are not only my sister but my friend. Thanks for your love and commiserating with me during this process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also referred to as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, changed the focus of education. This act increased the level of accountability for schools and placed a more profound emphasis on the educational practices affecting at-risk students. According to the National Center for School Engagement, at-risk students are primarily characterized as students who possess one or more of the following characteristics (www.schoolengagement.org, 2013):

1. Homeless or transient
2. Involved in drugs or alcohol
3. Abused sexually, physically, or emotionally
4. Mentally ill
5. Neglected at home or live in stressful family environments
6. Lacking social or emotional supports
7. Involved with delinquent peers such as street gangs

Based upon the fact that all the above mentioned are contributing factors to school failure; North Carolina requires that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) be written for all students who are at-risk of failure. The purpose of this statute is to attempt to prevent at-risk students from falling further behind (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2000). While this law is in place, the interpretation of the fidelity of implementation is left up to individual schools. Personal Education Plans should be implemented with allegiance for all students, but this is ever more important for students in an alternative learning setting (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2000). The school board of the rural county in Southeastern NC in this study has specific board policies, (Policy Code: 3405 Students

At-Risk of Academic Failure, 2013), as it relates to students at-risk of academic failure. The aim of the board is to ensure students acquire academic information and skills for success in secondary education as well as career success. To support this endeavor, structures have been identified and established to provide the needed support for students that are at-risk of academic failure and not being promoted or graduating. The school principal has the responsibility of identifying at-risk students and providing the necessary support for academic success (North Carolina G.S. 115C-105.41):

1. Personalized Educational Plan (PEP): These are individual plans based on student need to address academics and/or behavior beginning in Kindergarten. Principals are responsible to notify parents that their student has a PEP and must provide the parent and/or guardian with a copy. Parents are an integral part in the creation of this plan.
2. Transition Plan: Allows students to have social, academic, and emotional success as they transition school environments. This plan is in place for at-risk students to provide continued support and encouragement as the student transitions from elementary to middle and from middle to high. Included in this plan is an on-going evaluation of the process to include actions and goals that are being accomplished and updated as necessary.

The North Carolina State Board of Education approved guidelines for schools to follow when implementing and modifying alternative learning programs in 1999 in an effort to provide opportunities for the growing at-risk population of students. The guidelines were necessary to ensure safe and orderly learning environments for students in need of an alternative setting. According to the requirements set, all programs created would have to be flexible and effective in providing the elements necessary to help students overcome the challenges that could

possibly place them at-risk of inappropriate behavior and academic failure (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2000).

The county school system in Southeastern North Carolina has used the guidelines established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and has established specific board policies as it relates to alternative education (Policy Code: 3470/4305 Alternative Learning Programs/Schools, 2013). The purpose of the board is to set standards which provide a safe and orderly environment at each school using a Behavioral Management Plan, Parental Involvement Plan, and Conflict Resolution Plan.

The alternative learning program has been implemented as an additional option for students that continue to have challenges with behavior management and/or academics in the regular educational setting. The following have been identified by the school district as purposes of an alternative education setting:

1. To intervene and address problems that prevent a student from achieving success in the regular educational setting,
2. To reduce the risk that a student will drop out of school by providing resources to help the student resolve issues affecting his or her performance at school,
3. To return a student, if and when it is practicable, to the regular educational setting with the skills necessary to succeed in that environment, and
4. To preserve a safe and orderly learning environment in the regular educational setting.
5. Students are typically referred to schools based on their attendance area. Based on law, the board may decide to assign a student to a school outside of their district in an

effort for a student to attend a theme/specialized school or for any other reason that the board deems necessary.

Students attending an alternative school may be referred to school on a voluntary or involuntary basis.

The following is the transfer process for students according to www.ncpublicschools.org:

1. Responsibilities of Personnel at Referring School: In addition to any other procedures required by this policy, prior to referring a student to an alternative learning program or school, the principal of the referring school must:
 - a. document the procedures that were used to identify the student as being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly,
 - b. provide the reasons for referring the student to an alternative learning program or school, and
 - c. provide to the alternative learning program or school all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.
2. Responsibilities of School Personnel at the Alternative Learning Program or School.

If a student who is subject to G.S. 14-208.18 is assigned to an alternative school, the student must be supervised by school personnel at all times.
3. Voluntary Referral: This type of referral is encouraged whenever possible and a parent/guardian should be a part of this process. Once the transfer is approved the sending and receiving principal must arrange the transfer process. The sending principal must notify superintendent or designee of this transfer.
4. Involuntary Referral
 - a. the student presents a clear threat to the safety of other students or personnel;

- b. the student presents a significant disruption to the educational
- c. environment in the regular educational setting,
- d. the student is at-risk of dropping out or not meeting standards for promotion, and resources in addition to or different from those available in the regular educational setting are needed to address the issue,
- e. the student has been charged with a felony or a crime that allegedly endangered the safety of others, and it is reasonably foreseeable that the educational environment in the regular educational setting will be significantly disrupted if the student remains, or
- f. if the Code of Student Conduct provides for a transfer as a consequence of the student's behavior.

Before an involuntary transfer is extended, the referring school must document all academic, social and/or behavioral problems a student is having within the school. Once those areas have been identified, the actions, steps or consequences that have been enforced to correct behavior and/or academic performance within the regular education setting must be documented. Once the principal identifies that the steps, and/or actions that have been put in place do not correct the academic/behavior needs of the student, the principal must recommend to the superintendent that the student be transferred to the alternative school.

The principal must provide the following to support the request for alternative placement: (1) an explanation of the student's behavior or academic performance that is at issue, (2) documentation or a summary of the documentation of the efforts to assist the student in the student's regular educational setting, if applicable, and (3) documentation of the circumstances

that support an involuntary transfer (Policy Code: 3470/4305 Alternative Learning Programs/Schools, 2013).

In many instances, traditional educational settings do not meet the academic, social, and/or emotional needs of at-risk students. Many at-risk students are suspended or choose to drop out before completing the requirements needed to achieve graduation. Research suggests that students who experience a disconnect from mainstream learning environments tend to suffer adverse effects in their adult lives. Many students find the opportunity to reconnect to the educational environment through alternative education settings (Zweig, 2003). Students who are suspended from the traditional education setting are often disciplinary referrals assigned to non-traditional schools, also known as alternative schools. These schools must be equipped to meet the academic, social, behavioral, and emotional needs of students in order to increase the likelihood of success for the student—a decrease in deviant behavior and/or graduation.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has determined that each alternative learning program must have seven standards in operation. In May 2005, *House Bill 1076* ordered the State Board to adopt standards, rather than policies and standards, for alternative learning programs. These standards serve as the foundation for successful educational programs and were developed based on research and historical data gleaned from functioning alternative programs throughout the country. The seven standards are:

1. Clear mission
2. Leadership
3. Culture and climate
4. Professional Development
5. Parent/Community involvement

6. Curriculum and Instruction

7. Monitoring and Assessment

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has taken the seven standards and aligned them with legislation adopted in 1999. These standards may be viewed in Appendix A.

An effective alternative program design has specific components that should prove beneficial in meeting the needs of at-risk students. First and foremost, alternative programs should be governed by leaders who are visionaries, supportive in nature, and strong in their leadership practices. Those leaders should hire and retain staff that has a genuine concern for the well-being and success of all students. Leadership should try to hire staff that is representative of the school population. They should also advocate for innovative ways to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. All teachers and staff should demonstrate high expectations for themselves, as well as the students, and should maintain a highly engaging relationship with the students.

The lack of males and minorities that are going into teaching is an issue that is being faced nationally. Due to the fact that teaching is a female dominated profession with 77% of teachers nationwide being female based on research by The National Center for Education Statistics making it challenging to find minority male teachers (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>). The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) reports that throughout the country, White teachers comprise 83.5% of the teaching profession, Blacks make up 6.7%, and Native Americans a mere 0.5% (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009324/tables/sass0708_2009324_t12n_02.asp). As identified in the prior research in this document, the majority of students in alternative placements are

minority males; but, the majority of teachers in the profession are White females. So this deficit makes it challenging to provide teachers that these students can identify with personally.

Many of these alternative schools, especially in poorer school districts, struggle with retaining teachers. Teacher turnover disproportionally impacts minority students from low socio-economic schools (Guin, 2004, p. 3). Nationally the teacher turnover rate is 13% (Alliance for Excellent Teaching, 2014, p. 2). For the state of North Carolina the teacher turnover rate it is 19%; in the school district where the Academy is located it is 40%; at the Academy it is 40% (<http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?Page=2&pSchCode=316&pLEACode=830&pYear=2012-2013>). Based on a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), “This high turnover rate disproportionately affects high-poverty schools and seriously compromises the nation’s capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching.” Comprehensively the research supports that teacher turnover is an issue in alternative schools and negatively impacts the academic success of this at-risk population.

There should be a holistic approach to teaching and the dispensation of services to students. The student-teacher ratio should be kept to a minimum to provide for a more individualized and flexible delivery of instruction. There should also be a comprehensive counseling program that encompasses a wide range of services provided for students with varying issues affecting their academic performance. The school should be safe and orderly, maintaining a family-like atmosphere. School leaders should indeed hold students accountable for their actions, while being fair and equitable in the execution of consequences and interventions for inappropriate behaviors.

Statement of the Problem

What is the “Silent Epidemic?” Who does it impact? Why should America be concerned

with the “Silent Epidemic?” These questions may not evoke thought by many Americans because of the terminology of “Silent Epidemic.” However, according to the Gates Foundation, if one was to change the term to dropout, it would gain more attention and strike up a great deal of conversation (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). One of the factors used when calculating the “Silent Epidemic” and the effectiveness of schools is the graduation rate. America did not recognize the severity of the issue due to the skewed data that was prevalent in the United States as it relates to dropouts. Until recently, the dropout rate data were an underestimation of dropout rates and an overestimation of graduation rates, which has led us to the “Silent Epidemic” (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

The term “dropout” as we know it simply refers to a student in education that does not complete the course of action of graduating with a high school diploma. This study shall qualify dropout to refer only to high school students in America. The following are some interesting facts about dropout rates in America: 1.2 million fail to graduate from high school, on average 71% of high school students graduate, 40-50% disparity exists between White and minority groups, and 50% of African Americans graduate (Bridgeland et al., 2006). This issue affects every state in America to one degree or another. In North Carolina, there were 19,184 dropouts in 2008-2009, males drop out more frequently than females (59% and 41% respectively), minority groups have a larger percentage of dropouts than non-minority groups, the dropout rate in 2008-2009 was 3.7%, the dropout count in 2008-2009 was 638 and the dropout rate of the county in this study was 4.27%. According to the most recent data available for the 2012-2013 school year the state dropout rate dropped to 2.45 % and the Southeastern School District being studied was 4.22%. Even though state rates are being reported as declining, the Southeastern Counties School District rates are remaining constant and significantly below the state rate. Figure 1 details the

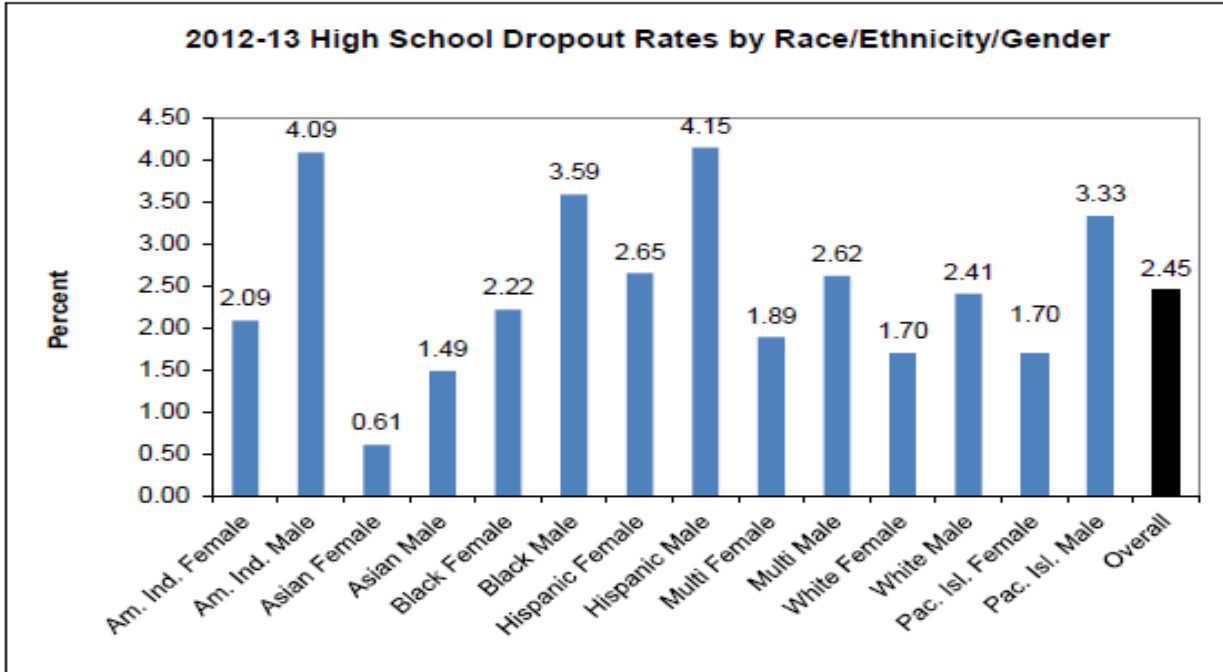


Figure 1. North Carolina high school dropout rates by race/ethnicity/gender for 2012-13.

dropout rates by race/ethnicity and gender in North Carolina High Schools for 2012-13 as reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April 2014 (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>).

Figure 2 details that dropout totals by race/ethnicity and gender in the Southeastern District in North Carolina for 2012-13 as reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April 2014; this district had one of the ten highest dropout rates in the state for 2012-13 (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>).

School systems in North Carolina are required to report dropout data on all dropouts in grades one and higher to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) annually (NCDPI, 2013). Each school should maintain a School Leaver Roster (SLR). A copy of the official roster should be located in the school and in the central office. The purpose of the SLR is to:

1. establish the total enrollment pool from the previous year and
2. document the status of leavers who are not in membership on the twentieth school day of the current year.

Maintaining, updating, and checking this record should be a primary ongoing responsibility.

Keeping an updated roster of school leavers can reduce substantially the number of transfers who are erroneously classified as dropouts (NCDPI, 2013).

The information in Figure 3 details students whose whereabouts are unknown must be included in the total count of dropouts for the reporting year for each LEA. Each LEA is required to report dropouts by the grade level of their last membership in the reporting year.

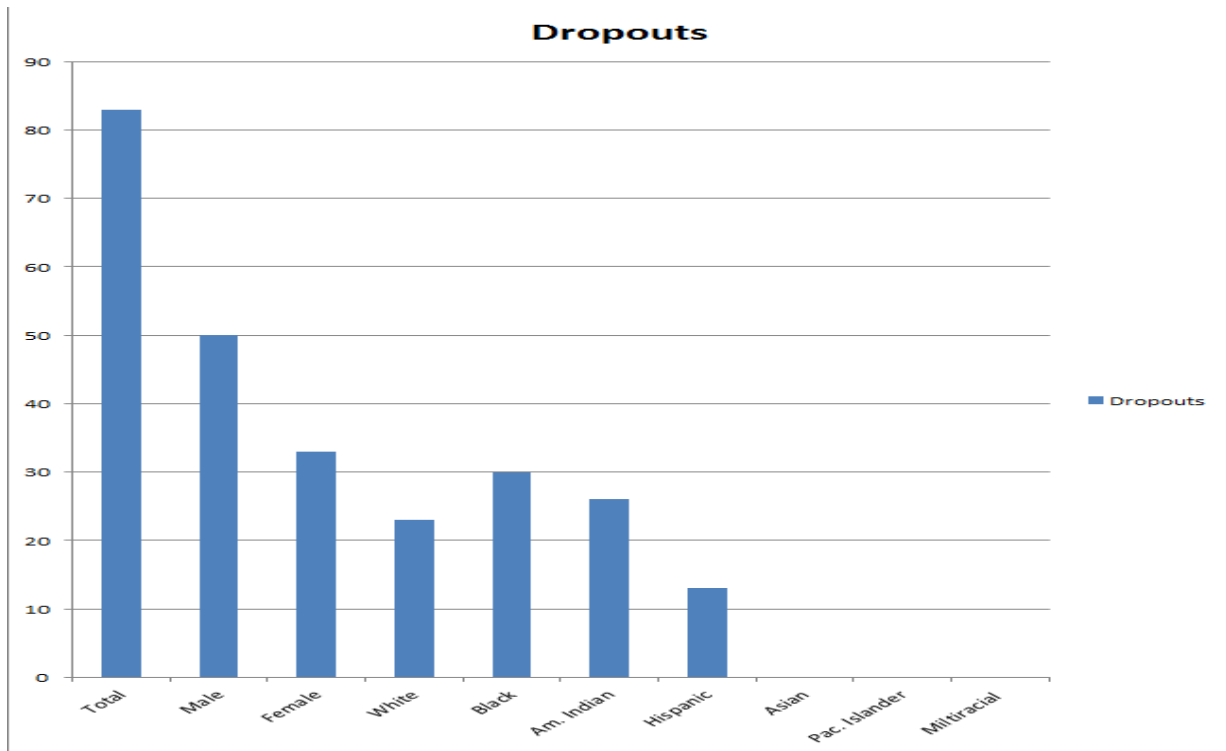


Figure 2. District in Southeastern NC school dropout totals by race/ethnicity/gender for 2012-13.

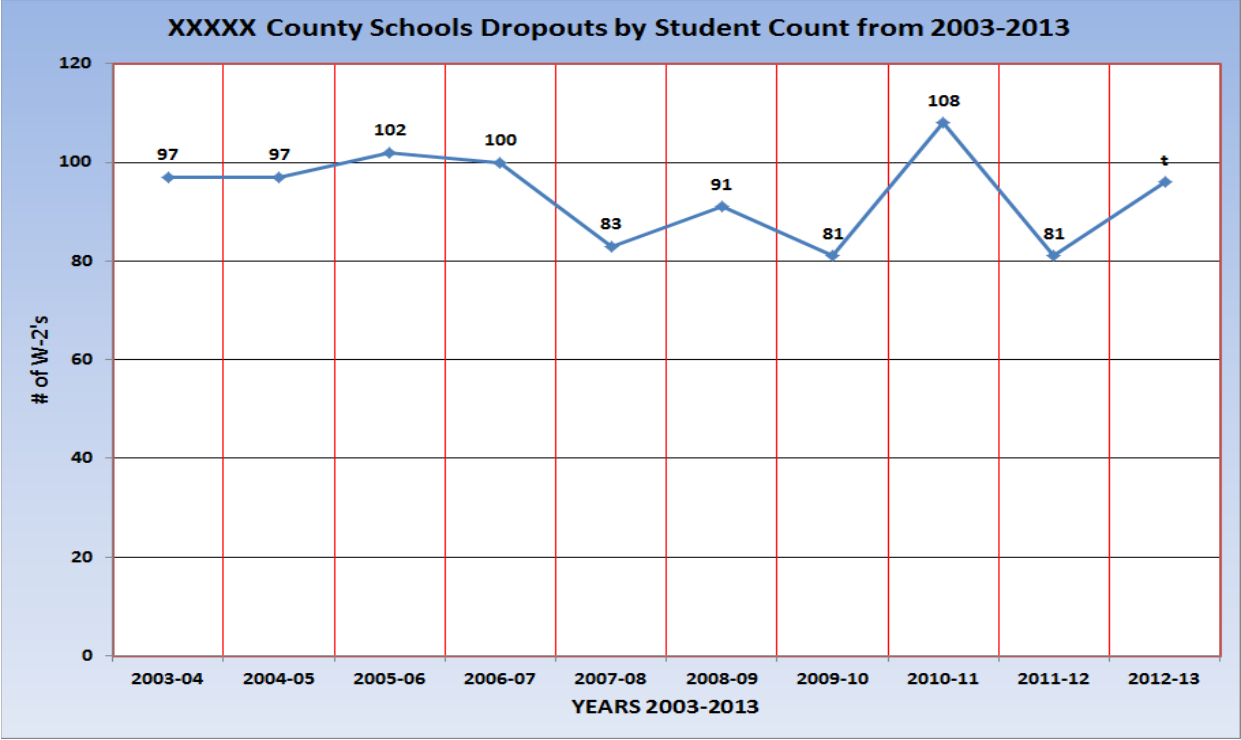


Figure 3. Dropouts by student count from 2003-2013 for the school district in Southeast, NC.

“For example, an eighth grader who fails to return to school in the fall as a ninth grader is reported at the eighth grade level, not the ninth grade. For this reason, all sending and receiving schools should share information on the status of school leavers during the first twenty-day period and for the remainder of the school year” (NCDPI, 2013). North Carolina has a very specific definition for dropouts and a method for calculation. A definition for “dropout” was also established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2013). This definition may be viewed in the Appendix B.

Figure 4 details the ten-year dropout rate for the school district in Southeastern North Carolina remained constant until the 2007-2008 school year and has increased substantially since that year. Based on the data, it is obvious that something needs to change in order to meet the needs of all students and prevent them from dropping out of school. In April 2014, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reported that the district in Southeast North Carolina has one of the top ten highest dropout rates out of the 115 school districts in the state (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>). Assessing and strengthening the strategies used in the alternative learning model may certainly help change these data for the positive in the future.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reports the following key terms as it relates to dropouts (NCDPI, 2013):

1. Dropout Referral Law: A state law that requires school systems to refer dropouts to appropriate education alternatives including community colleges. (Refer to G.S. 115C-47)
2. Initial Enrollee: A special status for students who enroll in a school system for the

- first time and remain in membership for twenty days or less. Students with this status are not included in the dropout count.
3. No Show: Term used to designate a student who is expected to return in the fall, but on day 20 of the new year is not in membership at the assigned school or in any other approved program. (Students whose whereabouts cannot be determined must be reported as dropouts.)
 4. Receiving School: Any school in the LEA to which a student is normally promoted or assigned during or at the end of a school year.
 5. Reporting Exemption: Any reason, as stated in the Uniform Dropout Definition, which excludes a student from being reported as a dropout.
 6. Reporting Year: A twelve-month period in which data are collected on dropouts. In North Carolina, the reporting year begins on the first day of the school year and runs through the last day of summer vacation.
 7. Sending School: The school from which students are transferred or promoted during or at the end of the school year.

Alternative schools and programs (ALPs), reported to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 14,090 student placements in 2011-2012, almost identical to the 14,093 reported in 2010-2011. There were 12,874 individual students placed in ALPs during the 2011-2012 school year. High schools in North Carolina reported 13,488 dropouts in 2011-2012. The grades 9-13 dropout rate in 2011-2012 was 3.01%, down from the 3.43% reported for 2010-2011. The decrease in dropout rate was 12.2%. The dropout rates for these school years for the county in this study were 5.37% and 4.15% respectively (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2013).

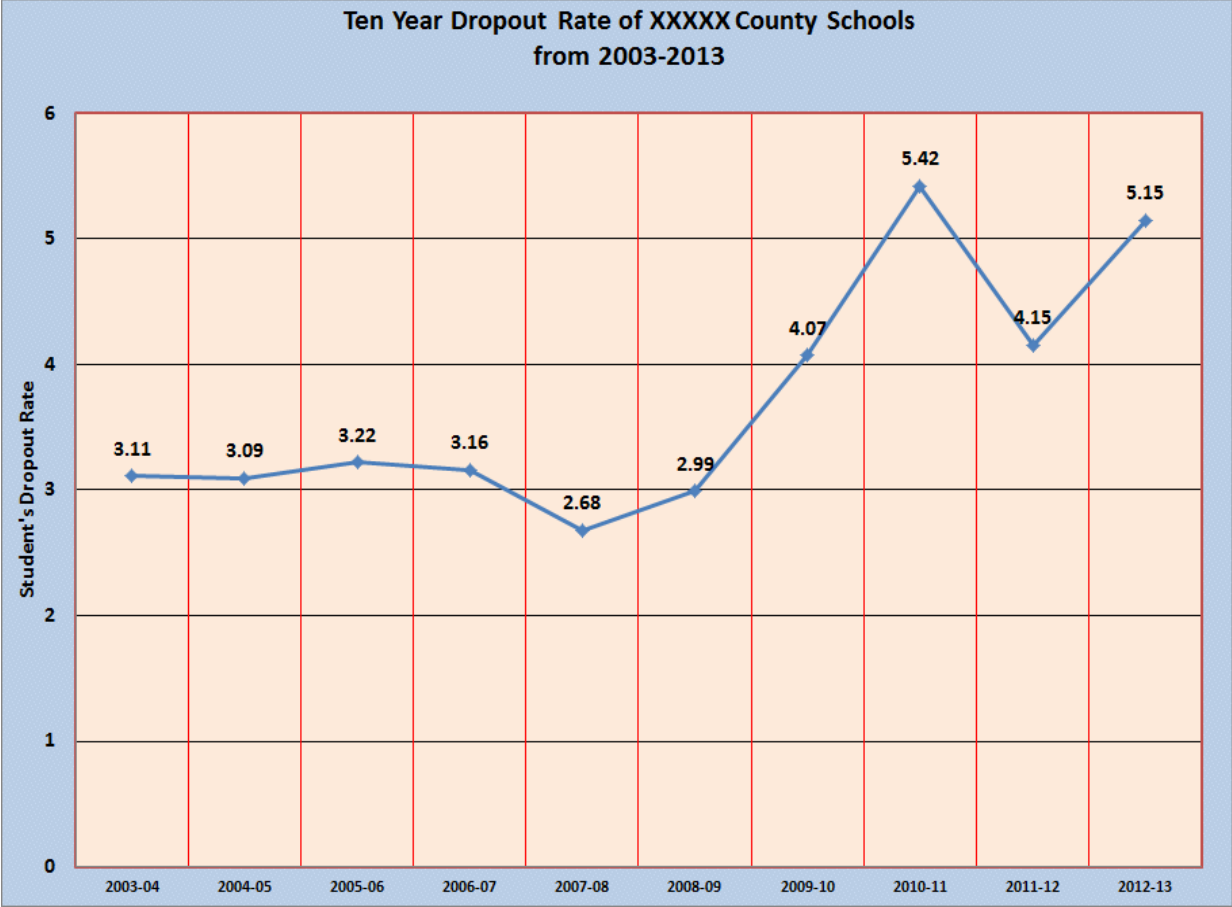


Figure 4. Ten year dropout rate from 2003-2013 for the school district in Southeast NC.

Students drop out of school for a number of reasons and the decisions are typically not made at the spur of the moment. It is a process that students go through over time that ultimately leads them to making the decision to drop out. One may summarize that the root of the issue for students is a lack of hope. Without hope students lose determination, discipline, dedication, and diligence; this eventually stifles their potential of being successful. The following are some reasons why students drop out of school: chronically late or absent, lack of interest in school and learning, demonstration of poor academic achievement, and non-academic challenges (poverty, health, and pregnancy). The information in Table 1 was released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April of 2014 and it details the coded reasons for students dropping out of school in 2012-13.

Kerby (2012) states that students of color are given harsher punishments in school discipline compared to their counterparts, representing approximately 70% of the school initiated arrests or referrals to law enforcement. In the same report by Kerby (2012) based upon the *Sentencing Project*, the students that are referred eventually end up in the juvenile justice system, resulting in 58% of these Black youth being sentenced to adult prisons. Another contributing factor to school success is poverty levels. Research conducted by Macartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot (2013) for the United States Census Bureau indicate African Americans are three times more likely to be in poverty than Whites.

The long lasting impact of habitual suspensions from school not only affects the life of the student and the family, it also has negative substantial effects on all of society. Consequently, the problem is not just one for individual families or schools to scrutinize, but all of the general public. Businesses, civic organizations, community leaders, mental health officials, and justice systems would be well advised and would benefit from reviewing the

Table 1

North Carolina High School Dropout Reason Codes Reported in 2012-13

Reason	Code	County	%
Attendance	ATTD	5068	45.9
Enrollment in a community college	COMM	1941	17.6
Lack of engagement with school and/or peers	ENGA	674	6.1
Unknown	UNKN	570	5.2
Academic problems	ACAD	420	3.8
Moved, school status unknown	MOVE	419	3.8
Choice of work over school	WORK	350	3.2
Incarcerated in adult facility	INCR	265	2.4
Unstable home environment	HOME	242	2.2
Failure to return after a long-term suspension	LTSU	205	1.9
Discipline problem	DISC	194	1.8
Need to care for children	CHLD	158	1.4
Pregnancy	PREG	121	1.1
Health problems	HEAL	120	1.1
Employment necessary	EMPL	114	1.0
Runaway	RNAW	90	0.8
Expectations of culture, family, or peers	EXPC	39	0.4
Suspected substance abuse	ABUS	38	0.3
Marriage	MARR	13	0.1
Difficulties with English language	LANG	8	0.1
Total		11,049	100.0

research and use the findings as the basis for banning together to take action to assist in addressing this alarming issue. Many school districts are currently investigating and implementing strategies to reduce suspensions, but this is disproportionately low based upon the research that demonstrates that suspension does not address its intent.

The majority of school districts are still using suspensions regularly for offenses that are nonviolent (. These same students are sent to alternative settings. Too often these alternative settings are not designed to meet the differentiated needs of these students. And they do not address the underlying reasons that the students were not succeeding the traditional school setting.

The information in Table 2 was a Report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee and released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in March of 2015. This was a consolidated data report for 2013-2014 and included reason for student assignments to alternative programs and schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina. Research of this county is being conducted using a program evaluation. This school district is located in rural North Carolina east of Interstate 95 and has a very unique history in the fact that from colonization to post-reconstruction, three distinct populations were established and well represented throughout the county: Native American, Black, and White; “Another landmark in the lower part of the county is Stewartsville Cemetery, founded in 1785. This is one historic place in the county which has significance for all three races. The cemetery, from its earliest days, has served as burial ground for Black, White, and Indian” (Myers, 2000). “In late February, 1874, a covered whiskey wagon stopped for the night on the John McNair plantation,

Table 2

*North Carolina Reasons for Student Assignments to Alternative Schools and Programs-Reported
in 2013*

Reason	Percent
Placed because of chronic misbehavior	25.8
Academic difficulty	20.5
Placed instead of long-term suspension	18.1
Student and/or parent choice	12.9
Academic acceleration or credit recovery	5.7
Emotional and/or psychological problems	4.3
Attendance problems	3.4
Transfer from ALP or other facility	3.2
Placed after EC Hearing for academic reasons	1.8
Dropout recovery	1.7
Personal and/or family problems	0.9
Placed because of a felony charge	0.8
Pregnancy related	0.7
Placed after EC Hearing for academic reasons	0.2
	100.0

and country people from all three races gathered for some merrymaking” (Dial & Eliades, 1996,p. 82). This is important to note because during the era of segregation following *Plessy v. Ferguson*, segregation was divided three ways in this county, a very unique structure for rural North Carolina (H. E. Bowen, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Upon the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*, schools remained segregated in this county; it was not until approximately fifteen years following this decision that voluntary desegregation began which would involve desegregating schools for Native Americans, Blacks, and Whites. The first integrated class would graduate from the main high school in 1970 (J. W. Locklear, personal communication, December 30, 2013). The following is a personal communication by J.W. Locklear, a lifetime resident of the county in Southeastern North Carolina:

In the county being researched the oldest public school is Central School (now closed). Built in 1909, it served as the only school for some years, containing both elementary and high school classes. The high school, a part of the public school system, was built on East Church Street in 1924 and was used as a high school until the building of the new high school. It was then used as a junior high school until it burned in 1973. In the northern part of town are two other schools of much historic interest. A private institute located in the district being studied is the county’s oldest private school. This school, in its present location on McGirt’s Bridge Road and in its former location in the Newtown section, has served several generations of Black students. It was founded in 1904 by Mr. E. M. McDuffie and is still operated by the McDuffie family. For many years this was the only school in town for Black students, and at one time it operated as both a public and a private school. One interesting feature of the private school in earlier days was the hospital, operated as a part of the school by Dr. N. E. Jackson. The school now operates as a preparatory school and has a long list of well-known graduates. I. Ellis Johnson School was the Black high school until the building of the latest high school and the simultaneous integration and consolidation of all county schools. The school was named for Mr. I. Ellis Johnson, a long-time educational leader in the county and the first principal of the school (Myers, 2000).

The alternative learning program that is being studied began in one of the vacated White schools; this school mainly housed students with special needs until later court decisions would transition these students into their least restrictive environment (L. D. Bowen, personal communication, December 1, 2013). In 2011, the alternative learning program was moved to its

present location which had previously been one of the Black high schools during segregation, next a middle school, and then an elementary school before finally reaching its current purpose (A. Cottone, personal communication, January 6, 2014).

Since post-reconstruction, the county in Southeastern North Carolina thrived on agriculture and would later thrive on textile mills during the Industrial Revolution until the passage of the *North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA)* (Myers, 2000). The county saw growth over the years resulting in attracting other industries in fields such as pharmaceuticals, golf supplies, soap, and glass (H. E. Bowen, personal communication, November 26, 2013). This economic surge would have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of many residents and create a slight population shift in the county as indicated in (H. E. Bowen, personal communication, November 26, 2013). However, this economic enjoyment halted as county taxes continued to climb, industries were annexed into the city, and some industries were moved overseas (H. E. Bowen, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Resulting from this was a slight exodus of residents who were in the higher socio-economic status category; the unemployment rate would see a significant increase and the housing market would decline with the exception of government subsidized housing (H. E. Bowen, personal communication, November 26, 2013). Therefore, the county has experienced a significant change in population, mainly socioeconomic, once again and these population shifts among the races (see Figure 5).

Numerous county agencies, including the school district, were reluctant to accept these changes and act proactively in addressing them; many of the actions now are reactionary to the changes that have occurred in the county mainly due to economic circumstances (L. D. Bowen, personal communication, December 1, 2013). The issues within the county and society as a whole are reflected within the school system and create greater challenges than existed as

Change in Population between 2000 and 2010, by Race -	County, North Carolina	Change	Percentages	Color
American Indian and Alaska native alone		737	23.05%	■
Asian alone		94	51.65%	■
Black or African American alone		509	3.79%	■
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific native alone		1	14.29%	■
Some other race alone		221	134.76%	■
Two or more races		310	64.72%	■
White alone		-1,713	-9.24%	■

Graph: Change in Population between 2000 and 2010, by Age and Race County, North Carolina

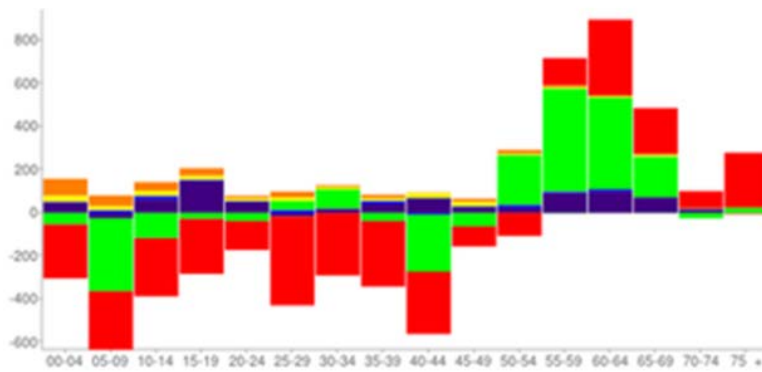


Figure 5. Population changes in district in Southeast NC between 2000-2010.

Income		Percent Growth or Total
2011 Est Median Family Income	\$37,700	(3.3%)
2000 Census Median Family Income	\$38,971	
2017 Proj Median Household Income	\$32,713	14.3%
2012 Proj Median Household Income	\$28,630	(7.7%)
2000 Census Median Household Income	\$31,024	
2011 Est Median Worker Earnings	\$23,089	
2017 Proj Per Capita Income	\$18,907	1.9%
2012 Proj Per Capita Income	\$17,189	9.5%
2000 Census Per Capita Income	\$15,693	
Est Total Pop with Income Below Poverty Level, Last 12 months	10,296	0.3%

Note. <http://accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37165.pdf> Prepared by North Carolina Department of Commerce, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, April 2013.

Figure 6. Percent growth or total income for district in Southeast NC.

recently as fifteen years ago (L. D. Bowen, personal communication, December 1, 2013). The “at-risk” population has grown and the income shifts in the county can be seen in Figure 6 just as with post-reconstruction, three races still remain to be served (L. D. Bowen, personal communication, December 1, 2013).

The need to study and address the needs of at-risk students, especially how their needs can be met by the school district’s alternative learning school is long overdue, but has been identified as a necessity by the school district (L. D. Bowen, personal communication, December 1, 2013).

Significance of the Study

First, there is a negative connotation associated with the alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina that serves the county’s middle and high school students. The community’s opinion of this school is that it is where students are sent to drop out; this opinion seemingly holds true to a certain extent when assessing the graduation rate comparisons of the alternative school with the only high school in the county. Furthermore, the fact that it is a separate alternative school, adds to the stereotype that exists.

Secondly, student discipline data in the county especially that of minority students has a direct impact on placement of students at the alternative school, the dropout rate, and the graduation rate. There has been a major population shift in the county during the past ten years, subsequently causing a substantial increase in the minority population; however, there has not been a change in the philosophy of the school system in terms of professional development on how to facilitate instruction for diverse populations or use of effective discipline models.

The findings and recommendations provided in this document should be considered suggestions for practitioners examining discipline factors that influence academic achievement in

an alternative setting. The information that follows may be used to create and/or modify programs that are flexible and effective in assisting students with overcoming challenges which may place them “at-risk” of academic failure resulting from self-defeating behaviors, so they can learn, graduate, and become productive members of society.

North Carolina Accountability Data

North Carolina's school districts, public schools, and charter schools receive web-based reporting through the *Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)* that offers an objective way to measure student growth and the impact on student learning (<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/effectiveness-model/evaas/>, 2013). EVAAS is a statistical analysis of North Carolina high stakes state assessment data, and the system provides schools with growth data to consider, in addition to achievement data (<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/effectiveness-model/evaas/>, 2013). “Educators are able to make data-informed instructional decisions to ensure academic growth and achievement of all students by using EVAAS” (<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/effectiveness-model/evaas/>, 2013). Listed in Figure 7 is the student learning, performance, and growth data for the alternative school for the 2012-2013 School Year according to the SAS Institute Inc. These data were released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in November 2013 and additional detailed information may be found at <http://www.ncaccountabilitymodel.org/SASPortal/mainUnchallenged.do?unchallenged=yes>. The following are the “Rules for Effectiveness Level Determination” as determined by SAS (SAS Institute Inc., 2012):

1. Exceeds Expected Growth: Schools whose students are making substantially more

- progress than the state growth standard/state average (the school's index is 2 or greater).
2. Meets Expected Growth: Schools whose students are making the same amount of progress as the state growth standard/state average (the school's index is equal to or greater than -2 but less than 2).
 3. Does Not Meet Expected Growth: Schools whose students are making substantially less progress than the state growth standard/state average (the school's index is less than -2).

Figures 7-20 clearly indicates that there are failures within the current model, methods, strategies, and practices that have been in place at the school in Southeastern NC. All tested areas are significantly low and while there is no significant achievement gap between any of the subgroups at the school, this is due to the fact that all subgroups are performing poorly at the school. Not only is this evident, but the fact is that this school did not meet expected growth. In fact, the school had a significant negative impact on student learning, -6.24. In short, this indicates that students fell behind rather than growing.

This study will attempt to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina to include: the demographic makeup of the students, parents/guardians, and faculty; the perceptions of students, adults, and the community regarding the climate of the Academy; discipline policies and implementation; training for faculty regarding discipline based upon the needs of the population; amount of discipline referrals, criminal activity by students, and . The intended outcome of the study will be to use the research to make recommendations that will help school leaders regarding the

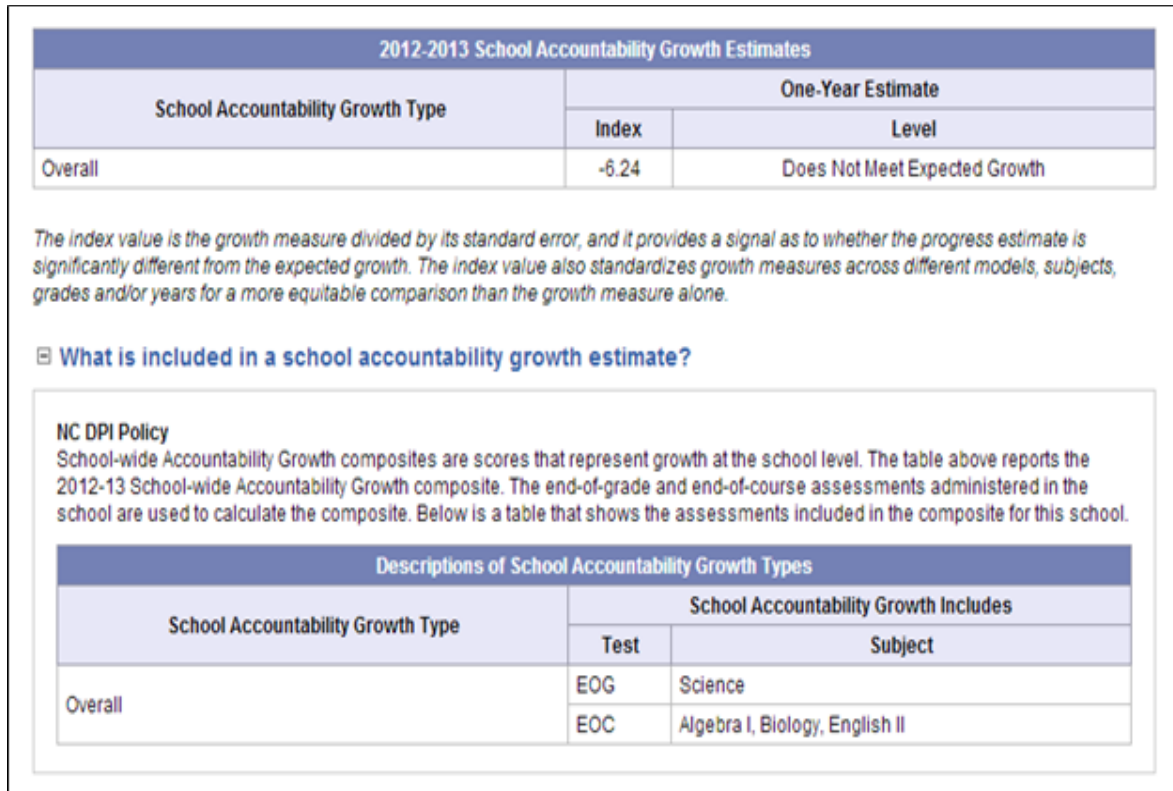


Figure 7. School accountability growth for alternative school in Southeastern NC.

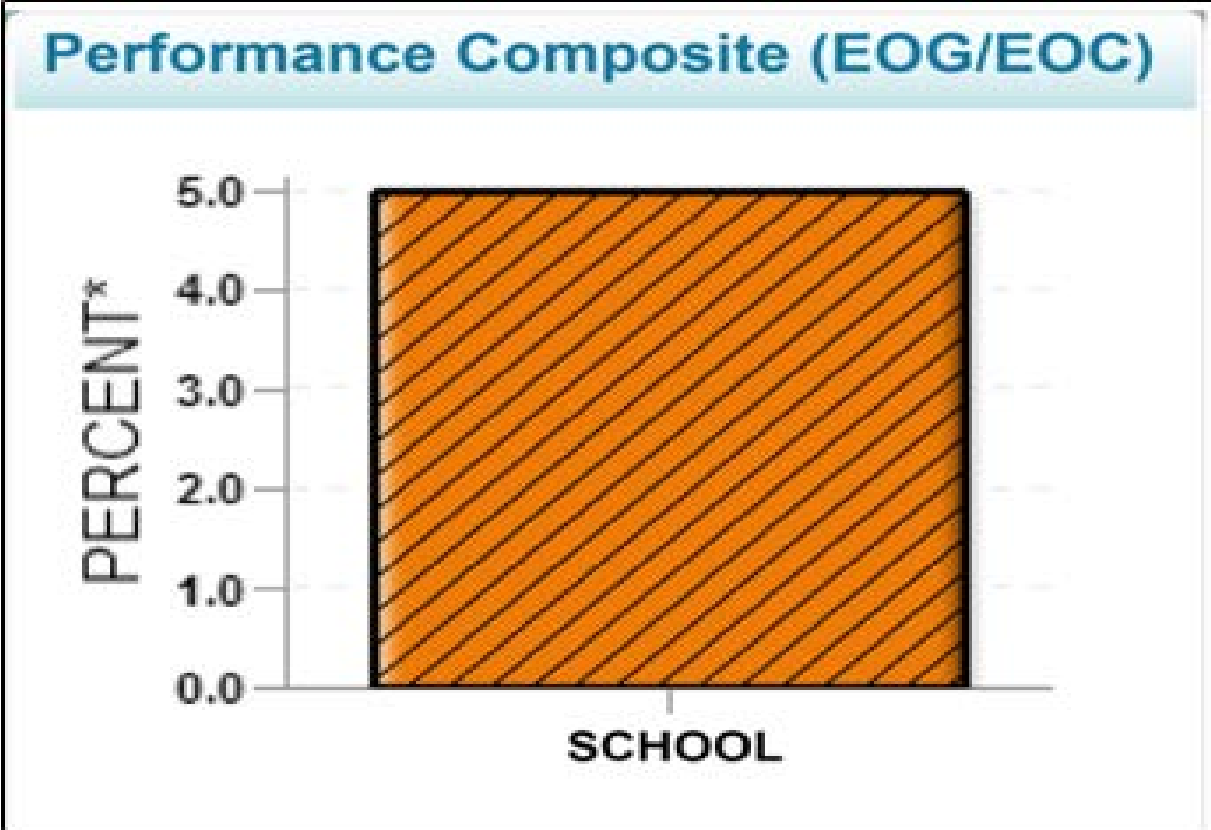
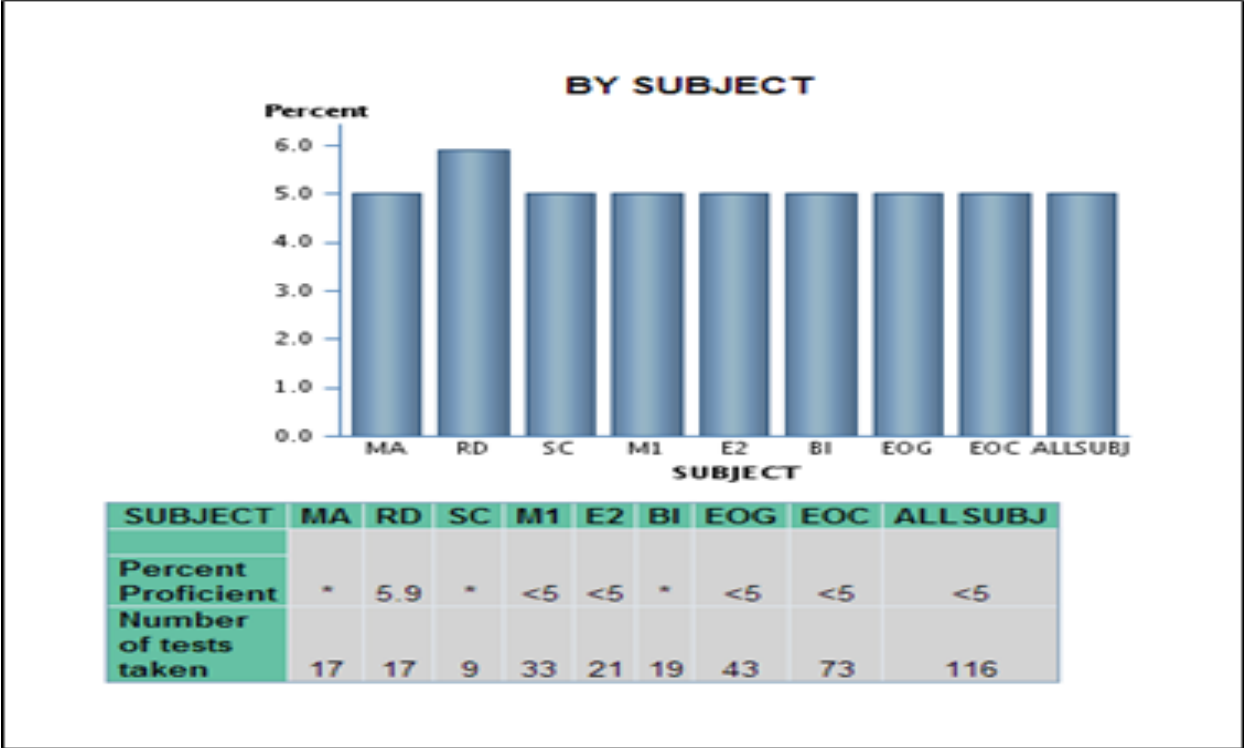
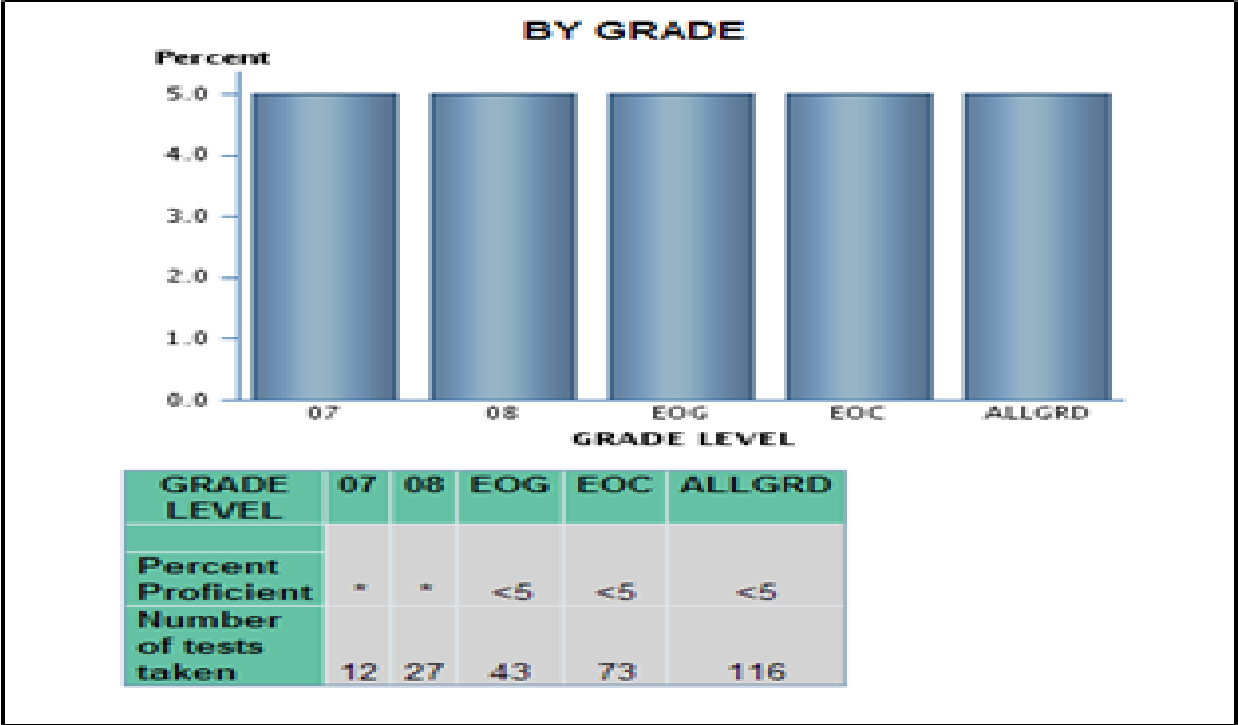


Figure 8. Performance composite for end of grade/course tests.



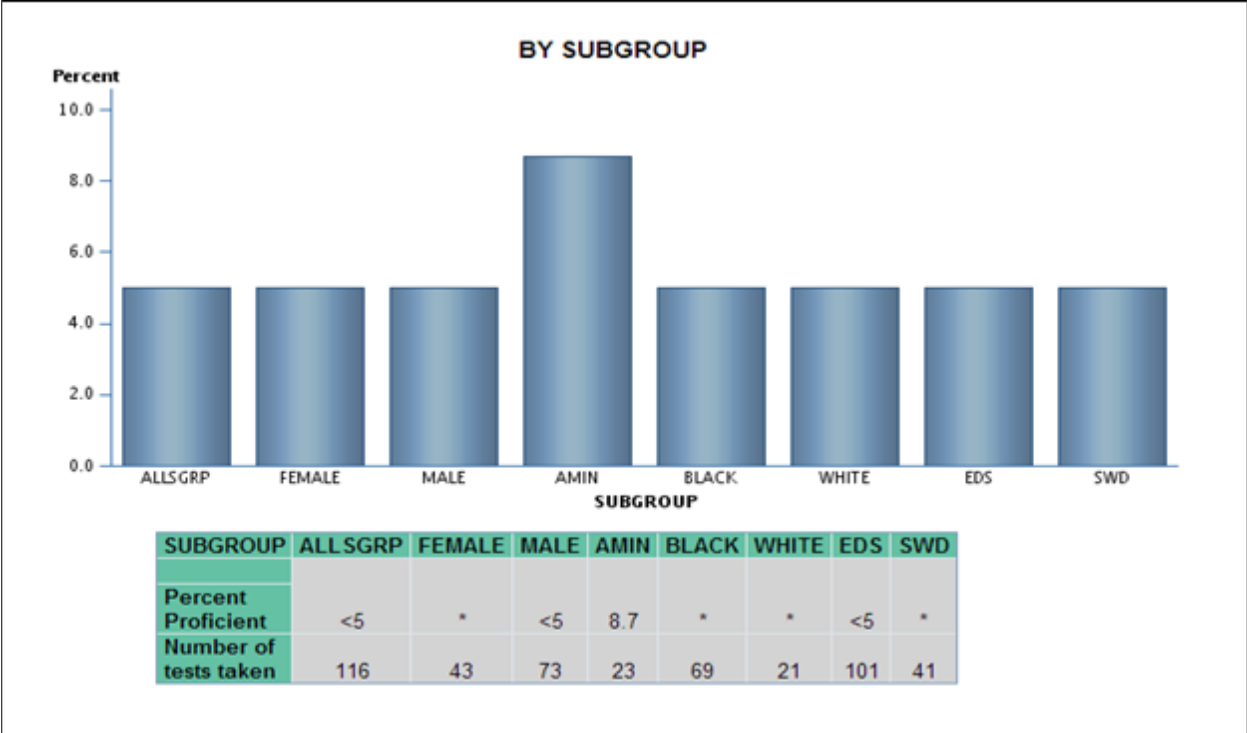
Note. This is calculated by dividing the number of students who scored proficient (level 3 or 4) by the total number of students tested in that subject area.

Figure 9. EOG/EOC percent proficient by subject.



Note. This is calculated by dividing the number of students who scored proficient (Level 3 or 4) by the total number of students tested in that grade.

Figure 10. EOG/EOC percent proficient by grade.



Note. This is calculated by dividing the number of students who scored proficient (level 3 or 4) by the total number of students tested in that subgroup

Figure 11. EOG/EOC percent proficient by subgroup.

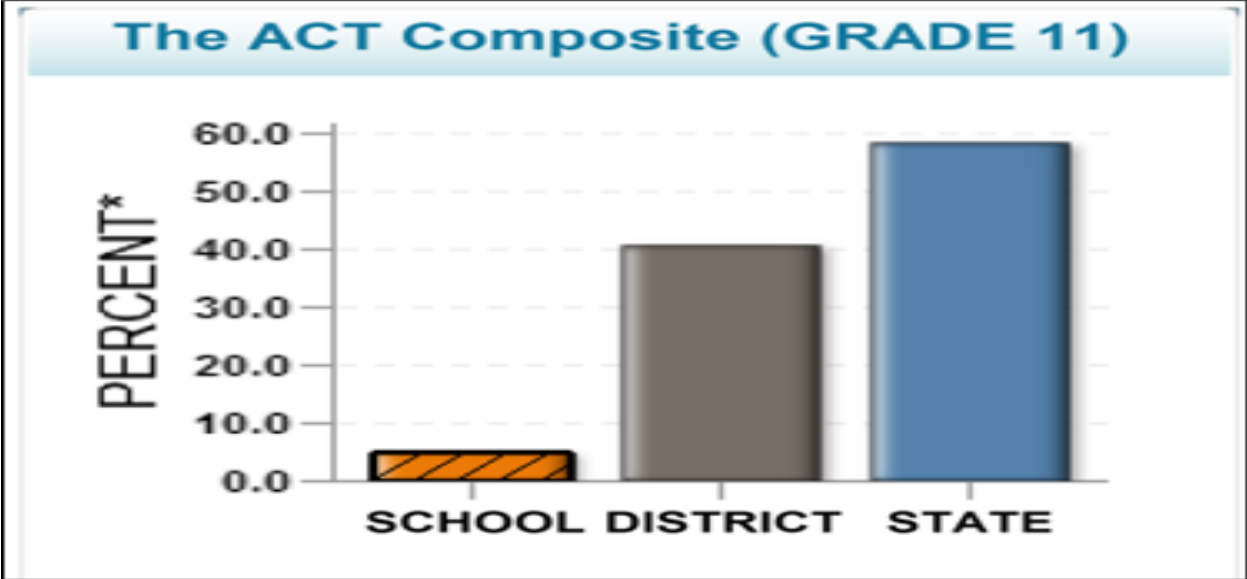
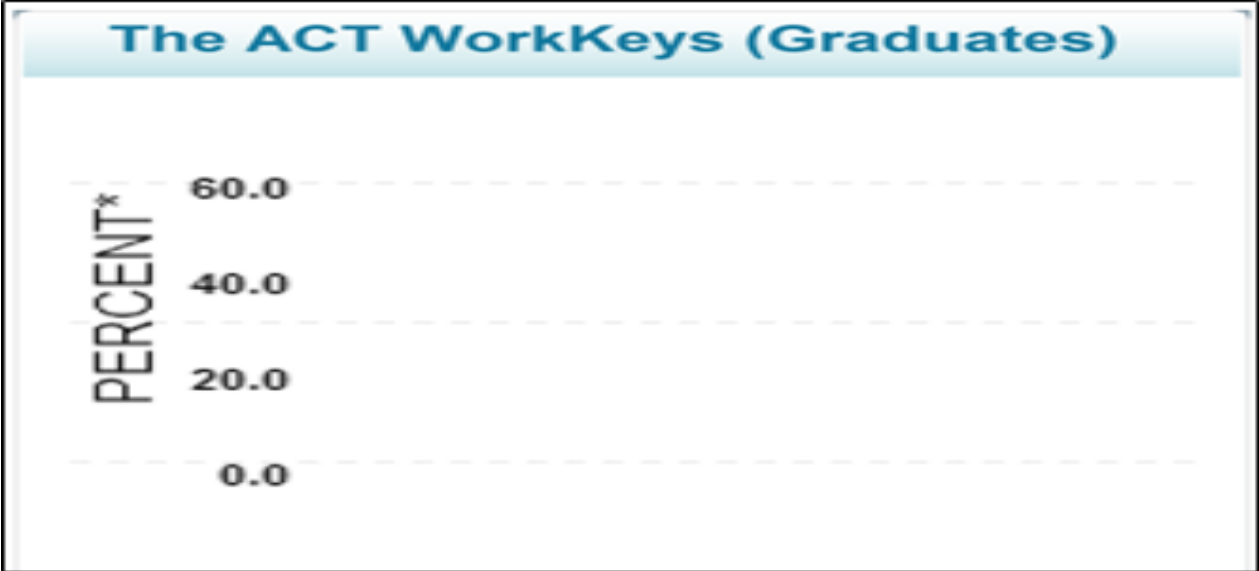


Figure 12. The ACT composite scores.



Note. Indicates that no students were tested with the assessment.

Figure 13. The ACT WorkKeys.

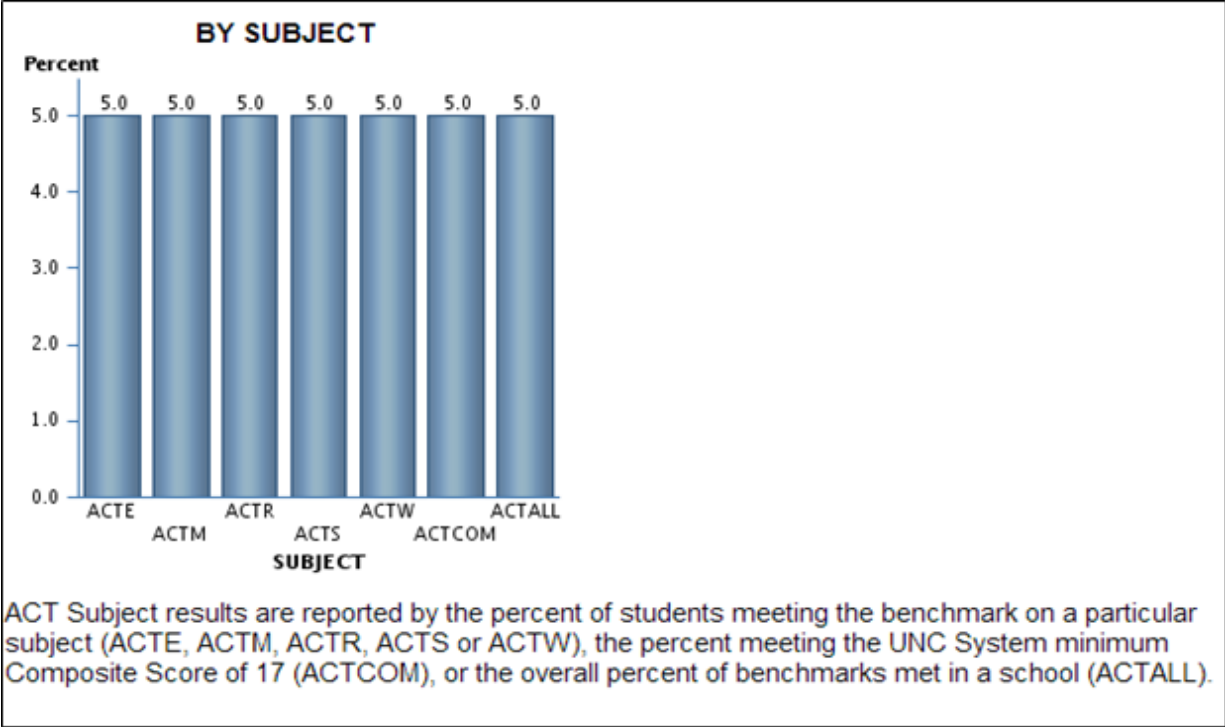


Figure 14. The ACT percent proficient by subject.

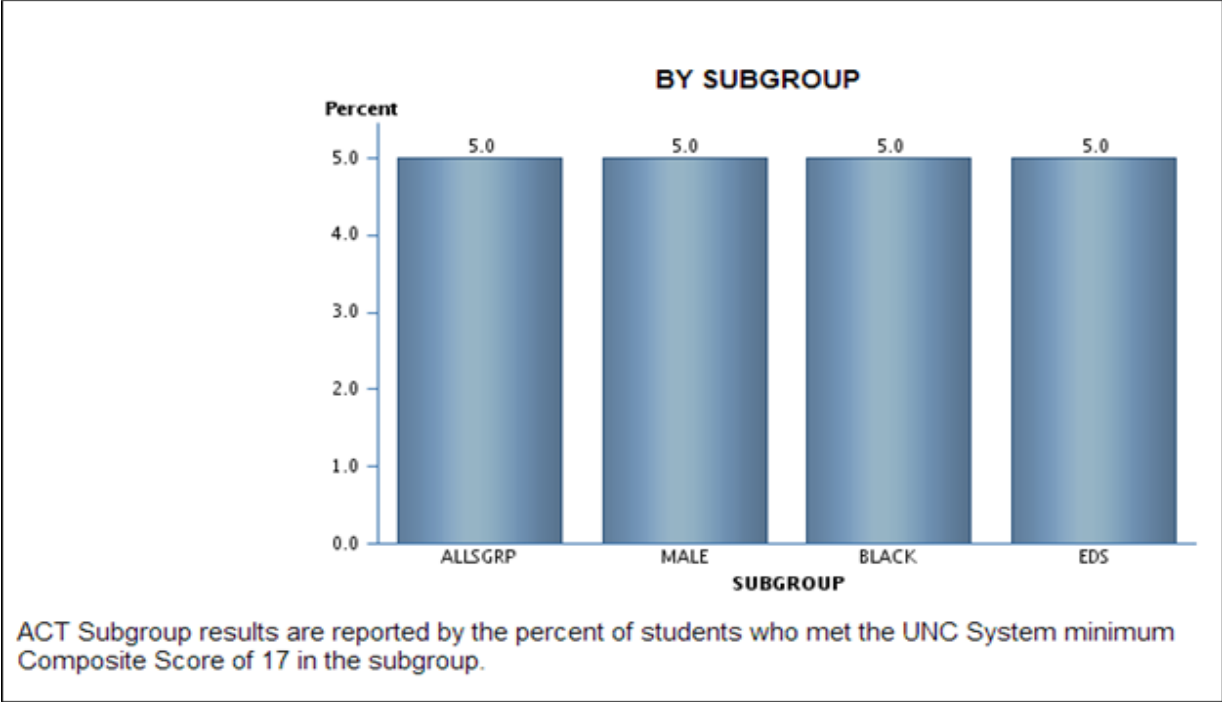


Figure 15. The ACT subgroup results.

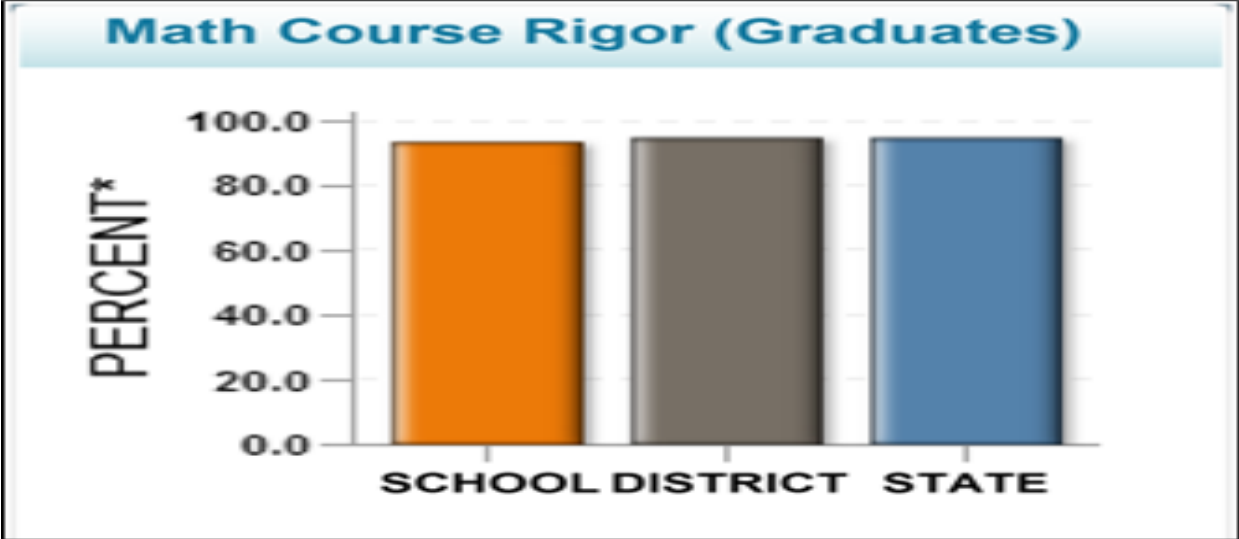


Figure 16. Math course rigor.

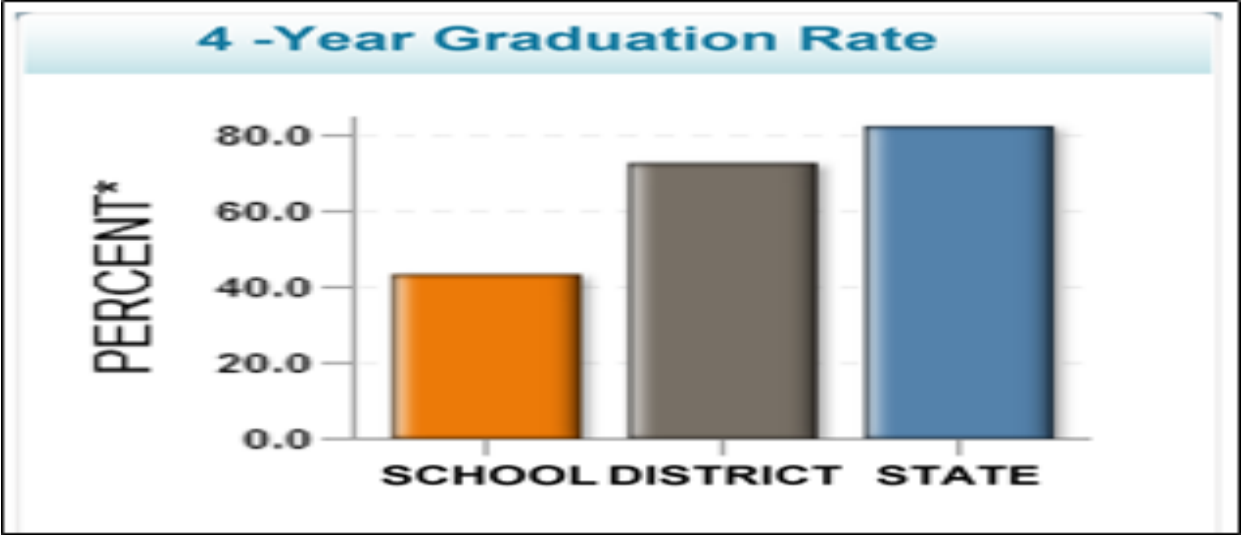


Figure 17. 4-Year graduation rate.

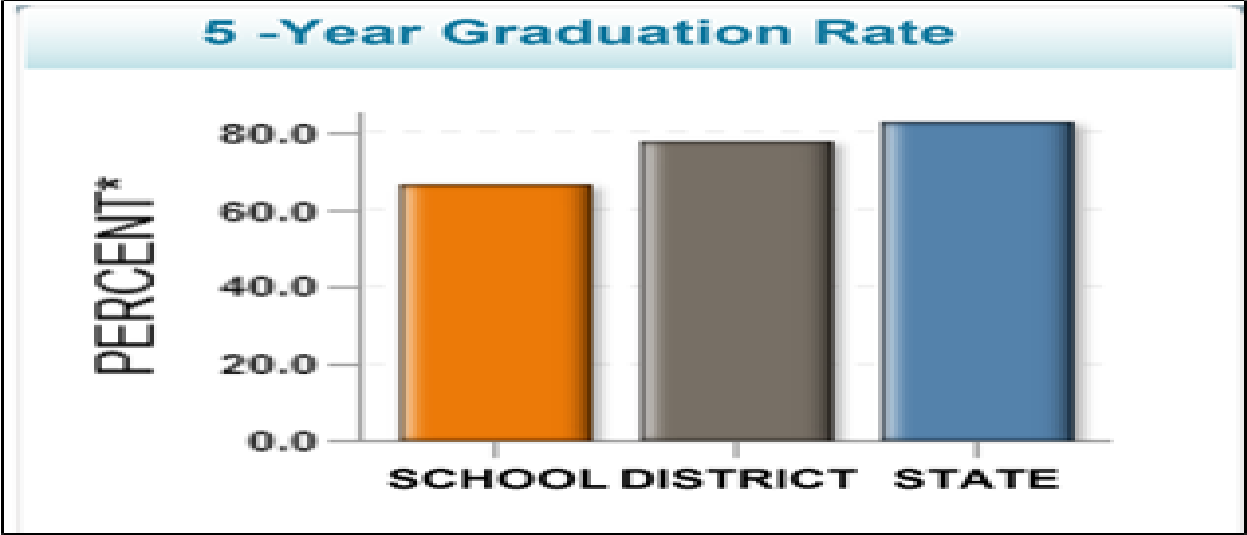


Figure 18. 5-Year graduation rate.

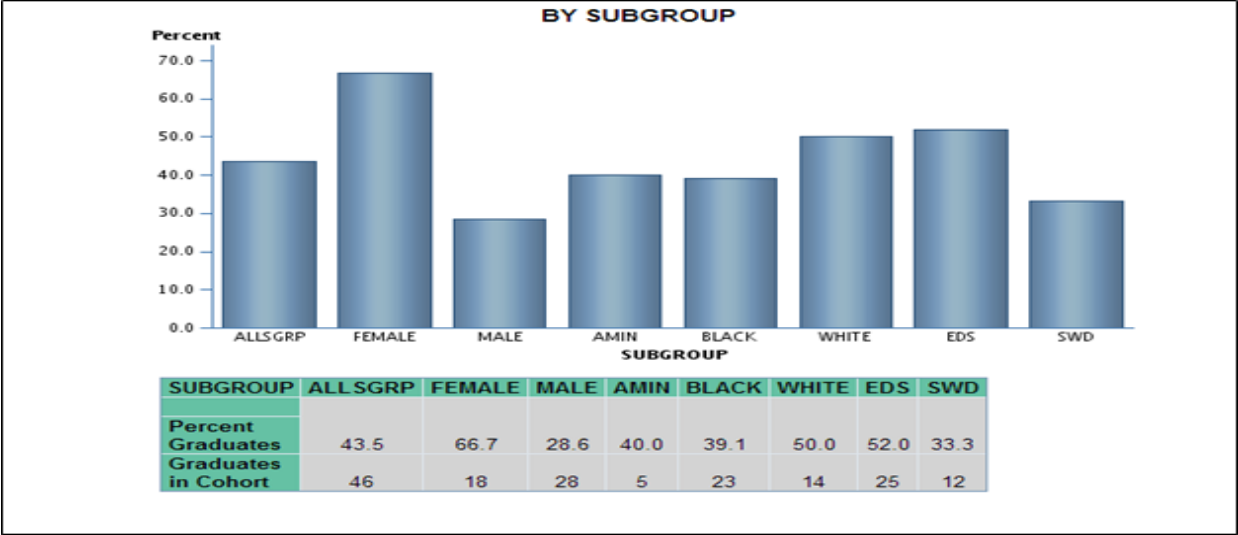


Figure 19. 4-Year graduation rate by subgroup.

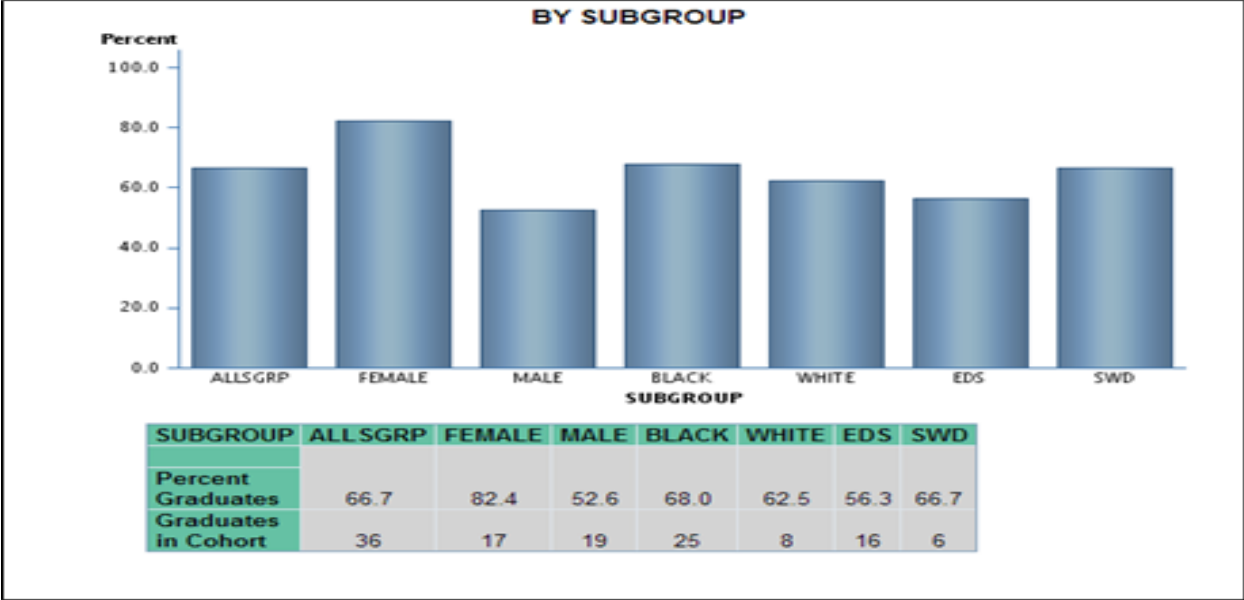


Figure 20. 5-Year graduation rate by subgroup.

implementation of discipline for at-risk students to be successful in a non-traditional school and competitive in a global society.

The study will comply with school board policy as it relates to student surveys: Survey of Students Policy ensures that the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment is met in regards to the appropriate legal requirements. Prior to any student taking part in a survey the school system must receive prior approval from the parent and/or guardian of student taking survey. The following are the limitations outlined by this policy (NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com--school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013):

1. political affiliations
2. mental or psychological problems
3. sex behavior and attitudes
4. illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating
5. critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships
6. legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians and ministers
7. religious practices, affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parents; or
8. income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

Research Questions

1. What are the **demographic factors** of the students, parents/guardians, and faculty that influence discipline issues?

2. What are the **varying perspectives** regarding the reputation of the alternative school?
3. How is the **implementation of the discipline model** viewed by students, parents/guardians, and faculty?
4. How is the **faculty prepared** to meet the specific needs of the at-risk students at this alternative school?

Overview of Methodology

This program evaluation consists of four chapters. The components of Chapter 1 include the following: Introduction, purpose of the problem of practice study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, limitations, assumptions, and an overview of the study.

Steps will be taken to attempt to maintain credibility and dependability in this research study. The group of candidates to be surveyed will have to demonstrate an identified set of characteristics that meet the criteria of the intended group to be studied making them purposive. Convenience will be another criteria utilized when choosing who will participate in the research for this study. Intent will be to present research for interested parties to be able to extrapolate and transfer the research findings and the conclusions presented. Participants for the study will vary to include school administration, teachers, support staff, students, and parents.

The review of literature is detailed in Chapter 2. Research methods and procedures for data analysis will be detailed in Chapter 3. The findings of the problem of practice study will be explained via graphs, charts, tables, and discussion in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 will conclude the program evaluation, providing intended and unintended findings, conclusions, as well as recommendations for future research.

Definition of Terms

The following terms, unless otherwise noted, are taken in part or in their entirety from Dropout Prevention: Strategies for improving high school graduation rates (Center for Child and Family Policy Duke University (http://www.familyimpactseminars.org/s_ncfis04report.pdf, 2013)

Age of compulsory attendance: Age until which minors are legally mandated to attend school. North Carolina and 26 other states require school attendance until age 16. Eight states require attendance until age 17, and 16 states require school attendance until 18.

Alternative learning center: A short-term intervention program for disruptive students who are unable to adjust to regular or traditional school setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Alternative learning program (ALP): Term used in North Carolina to refer to various kinds of alternative learning environments. North Carolina law requires that every school system have at least one alternative learning program. However, each school can define the target or targets for that program. ALPs serve different populations in different school systems.

Alternative education setting: Student's placement change that usually translates to homebound instruction provided by a certified teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Alternative schools: Most states have alternative schools to serve students whose needs cannot be met in a regular education, special education, or vocational school. They can take various forms, but generally provide non-traditional education and may serve as an adjunct to a regular school. Although these schools fall outside the categories of regular, special education and vocational education, they may provide similar services or curriculum. Some examples of alternative schools are schools for children with severe disabilities, schools for older students

who want to complete their education in the evening, education provided in residential treatment centers for substance abuse, schools for chronic truants, and schools for students with behavioral problems. About 6% of schools in the North Carolina Common Core of Data files are alternative schools.

At-risk: In the context of dropping out of school, being “at-risk” means a student has one or more factors that have been found to predict a high rate of school failure at some time in the future. This “failure” generally refers to dropping out of high school before graduating, but also can mean being retained within a grade from one year to the next. The risk factors include extreme poverty, having a parent who never finished high school, living in foster care and living in a household where the primary language spoken is not English.

Average daily attendance (ADA): Attendance is the presence of a student on days when school is in session. A student is counted as present only when he/she is actually at school, present at another activity sponsored by the school as part of the school’s program, or personally supervised by a member of the staff. The total number of days of attendance for all students divided by the total number of school days in a given period gives the average daily attendance (ADA).

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP): A functional behavior assessment (FBA) must be completed as the basis for this behavioral intervention plan (BIP). It describes the behavior and/or incident that prompted both plans. It also describes the behavior that was identified on the functional behavior assessment (FBA) to be targeted for interventions (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

Cohort graduation rate (as currently defined in North Carolina): The percentage of ninth-graders who graduate from high school four years later. This rate does not account for

students graduating in more than four years or those who drop out of school prior to grade nine. The federal rate (also referred to as the averaged freshman graduation rate) focuses on public high school students, as opposed to all high school students or the general population, and is designed to provide an estimate of on-time graduation from high school. Thus, it provides a measure of the extent to which public high schools are graduating students within the expected period of four years.

Completion rate (high school): The high school completion rate represents the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds that have left high school and earned a high school diploma or the equivalent, including a General Education Development credential.

Drop out (verb): The event of leaving school before graduating. Transferring from a public school to a private school, for example, is not regarded as a dropout event.

Dropout (noun): An individual who is not in school and who is not a graduate. A person who drops out of school may later return and graduate, but is called a “dropout” at the time he/she left school. At the time the person returns to school, he/she is called a “stopout.” Measures to describe these often complicated behaviors include the event dropout rate (or the closely related school persistence rate), the status dropout rate and the high school completion rate.

Dropout prevention programs: Interventions designed to increase high school completion rates. These interventions can include techniques such as the use of incentives, counseling or monitoring as the prevention/intervention of choice.

Dropout rate: The percentage of students who drop out of school in a given year (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act: A U.S. federal statute enacted April 11, 1965, that funds primary and secondary education and mandates professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs and parental involvement promotion. The Act was originally authorized through 1970; however, Congress has reauthorized the Act every five years since its enactment. This act contains “Title One,” which distributes funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A functional behavior assessment (FBA) must be completed as the basis for this behavioral intervention plan (BIP). It describes the behavior and/or incident that prompted both plans. It also describes the behavior that was identified on the functional behavior assessment (FBA) to be targeted for interventions (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

General Education Development (GED) credential: A comprehensive test used primarily to appraise the educational development of students who have not completed their formal high school education and who may earn a high school equivalency certificate through achieving satisfactory scores. The test is developed and distributed by the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education. In North Carolina, it is administered by the N.C. Community College System.

High school completion: An individual has completed high school if he/she has been awarded a high school diploma; in some states, an equivalent credential, such as the General Education Development (GED), counts.

High school diploma: A formal document regulated by each state certifying the successful completion of a prescribed secondary school program of studies. In some states or

school districts, high school diplomas are differentiated by type, such as an academic diploma, a general diploma or a vocational diploma.

High school dropout rate: Event, status and cohort dropout rates each provide a different perspective on the student dropout population.

High school equivalency certificate: A formal document certifying that an individual has met the state requirements for high school graduation equivalency by obtaining satisfactory scores on an approved examination and meeting other performance requirements (if any) set by a state education agency or other appropriate body

Home school: The traditional or regular school setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A written statement for a child with a disability developed and implemented according to federal and state regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Criteria listed on a student's individualized education plan (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001: A federal law that reauthorized a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of U.S. primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts and schools, as well as providing parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend. This law requires states to recruit and maintain "highly qualified" teachers. The progress of all public school students is measured annually for math and reading in grades three through eight and at least once during high school.

Non-traditional student: A public school student with any of the following characteristics: is old for grade, attends school part time, works full time while enrolled, has dependents or is a single parent.

Public school: A public institution that provides educational services. The age ranges are defined by state law, but may start as early as age 3 and, for certain populations, last as long as the early 20s. Public schools include regular, special education, vocational/technical, alternative public charter schools. They also include schools in juvenile detention centers, schools located on military bases and operated by the United States Department of Defense, and the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs- funded schools operated by local public school districts. Federal and state statutes generally require that all U.S. residents are entitled to an opportunity for a free and appropriate public education.

Recidivism: The tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior and/or the returning rate of student to the alternative program (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Retention: Repeating an academic year of school. Students are retained in grade if they are judged not to have the academic or social skills to advance to the next grade. Retention is known as “grade retention,” “being held back” or “repeating a grade.”

School district: An education agency at the local level that exists primarily to operate public schools or to contract for public school services. Synonyms are “local basic administrative unit” and “local education agency (LEA).”

Social promotion: The practice of promoting students to the next grade, despite low achievement.

Socioeconomic Status (SES): A measure of an individual's or family's economic and social ranking relative to other families. For students, SE typically takes into account the father's education level, mother's education level, father's occupation, mother's occupation and family income.

Student perception: How the student feels about their home school and/or alternative school based on survey (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Transition: Movement from alternative school back to home school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Limitations

There are limitations to this study that may occur due to the transient nature of the school's population. Subject participation may fluctuate based on exit criteria being met and other factors. Participant responses may be swayed based upon whether participants entered the alternative placement voluntarily or involuntarily. Surveys will be administered to the research participants based upon identified relevant characteristics such as being teachers, administrators, students, and/or parents involved with the school in Southeastern North Carolina. Other significant documents will also be utilized including suspension data, dropout rate data, attendance data, disproportionality data, assessment data, programs that exist within the school district, demographics of the school, and the school district. This study will focus on data from the 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 school years. A limitation to the assessment data would be the implementation of the newly adopted Common Core/Essential Standards curriculum. At the time of the study, *the* assessment data from DPI was, "All the documents will be analyzed, compiled, and reported."

The following limitations apply to this study:

1. Students enrolled in the alternative school were the only students surveyed for this study; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all alternative learning programs.
2. The survey was administered at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

Assumptions

The following assumptions apply to this study:

1. All participants in the survey responded truthfully to the questions.
2. All participants understand the verbiage used in the questions.

All students truly believed that they would not receive adverse repercussions for answers given in the survey because of the anonymity guaranteed by the researchers.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to an alternative high school in rural Southeastern North Carolina. Provided in this literature review are the following subtopics: at-risk students, alternative learning programs, alternative schools, school climate, school leaders, high school graduation, seat time, different approaches to course credit, school suspension background (causes and effects), in-school suspension, alternatives to suspensions, disparities of punishment regarding minorities and genders, classroom management, absences, poverty, dropout rates, and program structures associated with student success.

At-Risk Students

In January 2000, the North Carolina State Board of Education (Retrieved from www.ncpublicschools.org, 2003) defined an at-risk student as: a young person who, because of a wide range of individual, personal, financial, familial, social, behavioral or academic circumstances, may experience school failure or other unwanted outcomes unless interventions occur to reduce the risk factors. Circumstances which often place students at-risk may include but are not limited to:

1. not meeting state/local proficiency standards
2. grade retention
3. unidentified or inadequately addressed learning needs
4. alienation from school life
5. unchallenging curricula and/or instruction

6. tardiness and/or poor school attendance
7. negative peer influence
8. unmanageable behavior
9. substance abuse and other health risk behaviors
10. abuse and neglect
11. inadequate parental, family, and/or school support, and
12. limited English proficiency (pp. 55-56)

The School Board for the county in rural North Carolina has followed up on this general statute with specific board policy (Policy Code: 3405 Students At-Risk of Academic Failure) as it relates to students at-risk of academic failure. The aim of the board is to ensure students in all subgroups acquire academic information and skills for secondary education and career success. Lehr (2004) states, “the magnitude of the problem for student subgroups (including students of Hispanic and Native-American descent) points to the need for concerted efforts to design and implement programs and strategies that will keep youth in school and facilitate successful completion.” To support this endeavor, structures have been identified and put in place to provide the needed support for students who are at-risk of academic failure, lack of promotion, or not graduating. According to statute, the school principal has the responsibility of identifying at-risk students and providing the necessary support for academic success (G.S. 115C-105.41).

The actions of Dorman Jackson, a superintendent in a low performing school district in Sabine Parish, Louisiana, exemplify the manner in which the needs of at-risk students should be addressed. Upon being hired, Jackson implemented a remedial program designed to identify learning challenges students had early on and to put strategies in place to provide the necessary support and assistance. Initially, this program provided the needed results but eventually reached

a plateau in performance. According to Jackson, “We discovered we had carried our kids about as far as we could” (DeAngelis, 2012).

Recognizing their limits in terms of providing the necessary support for at-risk students, the district realized that many students identified as at-risk faced various personal roadblocks. Areas of concern identified were overworked parents, student emotional problems, and student drug and alcohol abuse. These risk factors spurred the district to enlist the support of psychologists Howard Adelman, PhD, and Linda Taylor, PhD, co-directors of the mental health department at the University of California. They created a model referred to as the “enabling component” (DeAngelis, 2012). That enabling component focused on the educational and psychosocial barriers to student achievement.

The successful implementation of this model provided an increase in student achievement for Sabine Parish from 2007 to 2010, with an increase in graduation rate from 73% to 81.2% (DeAngelis, 2012). Louisiana is comprised of 60 districts and Sabine Parish started at 37th in 2003 and improved to 14th by 2012 based on student achievement (DeAngelis, 2012).

“The enabling component is designed around six areas of focus (DeAngelis, 2012):

1. Making innovative changes to classroom instruction: These changes include bringing support personnel into the classroom rather than taking children out of class when their behavior or inattention may have gotten out of control. It also calls for revamping teaching and intervention methods to help teachers handle problems more easily and effectively.
2. Supporting children through transitions: Not only are children moving back and forth from school to home and from one school level to the next, many are also coping with family disruptions, such as a divorce.

3. Connecting families to schools and school activities: This includes offering basic parenting classes, fostering more meetings between parents and teachers and involving families in homework projects, field trips and other activities.
4. Maximizing use of community resources: Developing and maintaining strong connections with community resources can greatly enhance schools' capacity to support these youngsters. Entities to tap include public and private agencies, colleges and universities, businesses, artists and cultural institutions, faith-based organizations and volunteer groups.
5. Reorganizing crisis assistance and prevention: Schools need systems that can respond quickly and effectively in the wake of any crisis, whether it is a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, or students acting in a way that endangers others. Schools must also create safe and caring learning environments that deal preemptively with disruptive and potentially dangerous behavior such as bullying and harassment.
6. Improving links to external mental health and behavioral services: When internal resources are not enough, schools should be able to refer students and families to mental health and financial assistance services in a timely fashion.

These factors identified by DeAngelis work well, but it is important to note that these are not the only strategies to help at-risk students. Maurice Elias (2009) identified successful strategies for helping at-risk youth that may be combined with the work of DeAngelis (2012) to provide even greater support.

Additionally, in an article entitled "The Four Keys to Helping At-Risk Kids," Maurice Elias, professor at Rutgers University, identified strategies that provide support and positively impact at-risk students (Elias, 2009).

1. Caring, Sustained Relationships: relationships are established but not sustained especially in secondary schools. The key that will sustain relationships is the need to build a sense of trust and have time to communicate the complexity, frustrations, and positive aspects of their lives in and out of school.
2. Reachable Goals: students' goals are not attainable because they are based on what they learn from mass culture. The goals that are most sustained and achieved are those that are within our reach if we apply some effort.
3. Realistic, Hopeful Pathways: students need adults to help them create realistic pathways with guardrails. Students also need what the Character Education Partnership describes as "leeway and forgiveness"--that is, the knowledge that going off the path does not destroy the dream.
4. Engaging School and Community Settings: the idea of engagement takes place when students have a chance to receive positive recognition and to make positive contributions in an environment where teamwork is evident and they realize the possibility of obtaining a new skill that is applicable to their life. Engaging students in the community is identifiable by mottos, logos, and missions that allow the student an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging. Mentors outside the school are great resources to communicate with students their choices and the consequences that are attached to those choices.

In the State of North Carolina, the development of Alternative Learning Programs attempts to fulfill the needs identified in Professor Elias's research. These four components can also be found in a varied version in some of the policies and procedures for the school board in the county in rural North Carolina. Furthermore, the four components that he describes in his work

can be found in the North Carolina State guidelines for alternative learning schools and/or programs.

Alternative Learning Programs

Alternative programs were created to “serve a population of children and youth whose education and treatment required the use of innovative and comprehensive techniques and methodologies that were, and are, largely absent from most regular educational settings” (De La Ossa, 2005). In the history of alternative education, its foundation or basis can be traced to the beliefs of religious leaders, social reformers, romantics, and individualists. The focus of alternative education lends itself to fulfill the obligation of developing the whole child (mental, physical, spiritual, and social) in an effort to see each individual student be successful, regardless of environment and/or background.

Furthermore, Timothy Young documented the history of alternative schools and determined that the foundational concept of alternative schools could be seen at the onset of education as we know it in America (Ryan, 2009). The word “alternative” is used to describe the vast range of educational settings that provide services not evident in regular education settings. Public alternative schools were defined as “a school, not located within or attached to a mainstream school that students in the public school district can choose to attend at no additional cost” (De La Ossa, 2005).

Miller (2006) identified that alternative schools were born from an attempt to provide support and assistance to students that were not successful in a traditional setting (Miller, as cited in Walker, 2007, p. 20). The goals for these alternative schools are as follows: meaningful relationships, peer guidance, parental involvement, small class sizes, student decision-making, and a diverse curriculum. Miller (2006) further states that alternative schools provide a more

flexible curriculum designed to meet the needs of the students in which the school was created to serve. Also, according to Miller (2006), these schools are designed for students that are underachieving and do not qualify for exceptional children program (Miller, as cited in Walker, 2007, p. 20).

Furthermore, according to the North Carolina Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Alternative Learning Programs are defined as services for students at-risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, and/or dropping out of school. Such services should be designed to better meet the needs of students who have not been successful in the traditional school setting (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2003).

Alternative Learning Programs serve students at any level who are (NCDPI, 2009):

1. suspended and/or expelled;
2. at-risk of participation in juvenile crime;
3. have dropped out and desire to return to school;
4. have a history of truancy;
5. are returning from juvenile justice settings or psychiatric hospitals; and
6. whose learning styles are better served in an alternative setting.

In addition, these programs provide individualized programs outside of a standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives.

An alternative learning program must:

1. provide the primary instruction for selected at-risk students;
2. enroll students for a designated period of time, usually a minimum of one academic grading period; and

3. offer course credit or grade-level promotion credit in core academic areas.

Alternative learning programs may also address:

1. behavioral or emotional problems that interfere with adjustments to or benefiting from the regular education classroom,
2. provide smaller classes and/or student/teacher ratios,
3. provide flexible scheduling, and/or
4. assist students in meeting graduation requirements other than course credits.

Alternative learning programs for at-risk students typically serve students in a facility within the regular school.

A School Board's purpose is to provide a safe and orderly environment at each school using a Behavioral Management Plan, a Parental Involvement Plan, and a Conflict Resolution Plan (Policy Code: 3470/4305). The Alternative Learning program has been implemented as an additional option for students who continue to have challenges with behavior management and/or academics in the regular education setting. According to Policy Code: 3470/4305, the following have been identified by the school district as purposes for an alternative educational setting:

1. To intervene and address problems that prevent a student from achieving success in the regular educational setting,
2. To reduce the risk that a student will drop out of school by providing resources to help the student resolve issues affecting his or her performance at school,
3. To return a student, if and when it is practicable, to the regular educational setting with the skills necessary to succeed in that environment, and
4. To preserve a safe and orderly learning environment in the regular educational setting.

According to Policy Code: 3470/4305 students are typically referred to schools based on their attendance area. Based on school board policy, the board has the right to assign a student to a school outside of their attendance zone to allow that student to attend a theme/specialized school or for any other reason that the School Board deems necessary. The county in Southeastern NC has used the guidelines established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and has established specific board policies as it relates to alternative education.

Students attending an alternative school may be referred to school on a voluntary or an involuntary basis, according to school board policy. The following is the transfer process for students:

1. Responsibilities of Personnel at Referring School: In addition to any other procedures required by this policy, prior to referring a student to an alternative learning program or school, the principal of the referring school must:
 - a. document the procedures that were used to identify the student being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly,
 - b. provide the reasons for referring the student to an alternative learning program or school, and
 - c. provide to the alternative learning program or school all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.
2. Responsibilities of School Personnel at the Alternative Learning Program or School: If a student who is subject to G.S. 14-208.18 is assigned to an alternative school, the student must be supervised by school personnel at all times.
3. Voluntary Referral: This type of referral is encouraged whenever possible and parent/guardian should be a part of this process. Once the transfer is approved, the

sending and receiving principal must arrange the transfer process. The sending principal must notify superintendent or designee of this transfer.

4. Involuntary Referral

- a. the student presents a clear threat to the safety of other students or personnel,
- b. the student presents a significant disruption to the educational environment in the regular educational setting,
- c. the student is at-risk of dropping out or not meeting standards for promotion, and resources in addition to or different from those available in the regular educational setting are needed to address the issue,
- d. the student has been charged with a felony or a crime that allegedly endangered the safety of others, and it is reasonably foreseeable that the educational environment in the regular educational setting will be significantly disrupted if the student remains, or
- e. if the Code of Student Conduct provides for a transfer as a consequence of the student's behavior.

Before an involuntary transfer is extended, the referring school must document all academic, social, and/or behavioral problems a student is having within the school. Once those areas have been documented, school staff must identify what action steps or consequences have been enforced to correct behavior and/or academic performance within the regular education setting. Once the principal has determined that the steps and/or actions put in place have not corrected the academic/behavior needs of the student, the principal must recommend to the superintendent that the student be transferred to the alternative school.

The principal must provide the following to support request for alternative placement: (1) an explanation of the student's behavior or academic performance that is at issue; (2) documentation or a summary of the documentation of the efforts to assist the student in the student's regular educational setting, if applicable; and (3) documentation of the circumstances that support an involuntary transfer (Policy Code: 3470/4305 Alternative Learning Programs/Schools, 2013).

The guidelines adopted by the board perpetuate the negative connotation associated with the school because it suggests that the school is a punishment rather than an alternative designed to meet an educational need that the traditional setting is unable to meet.

Alternative programs cannot work without teachers who are committed to meeting the diverse needs of the students enrolled in the program. AIM (Alternative Instructional Model), an alternative program in New York, allows students to remain connected to their home school, thus providing the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. Individualized instruction, continuous improvement, scheduling flexibility, community service projects, and an environment rich in student resources have proven to increase student success (Grobe, 2002).

North Carolina school districts may have alternative learning programs or alternative learning schools. The look of an alternative program can be as unique as its student population. AIM (Alternative Instructional Model), an alternative program in New York, allows students to remain connected to their home school, thus providing the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. Individualized instruction, continuous improvement, scheduling flexibility, community service projects, and an environment rich in student resources have each proven to be valuable elements of successful alternative learning programs to increase student

success (Grobe, 2002). To gauge the success of alternative learning programs in school districts within North Carolina, it is important to understand what such organizations entail.

Alternative Schools

An alternative school is one option for an alternative learning program. This model serves at-risk students and has an organizational designation based on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction assignment of an official school code. An alternative school is different from a regular public school in areas such as teaching methods, hours, curriculum, or location sites. Alternative schools provide many paths to the end-goal which, for some, is simply to return to a public school. Despite these differences, alternative schools are intended to meet the diverse learning needs of at-risk students.

The alternative schools in existence today are derivatives of an educational evolution that began in the 1960s. During the Cold War and the 1957 Sputnik launch, schools were deemed cold and insensitive to minority students as well as to those with specialized needs. By the end of the 1960s, the face of alternative schools began to change, becoming more specialized to meet the needs of the nation's most vulnerable students (Ianni, 2009). Alternative programs were created to "serve a population of children and youth whose education and treatment required the use of innovative and comprehensive techniques and methodologies that were, and are, largely absent from most regular educational settings" (De La Ossa, 2005).

The word "alternative" is used to describe the vast range of educational settings that provide services not evident in regular education settings. A general description of what an alternative education program entails has been elusive. Vernon H. Smith defines an alternative school as "any school that provides alternative learning experiences beyond those provided by

the traditional schools within its community and is available to all students at no additional cost” (Ianni, 2009).

Throughout the country, many schools offer alternative learning experiences, but alternative schools are traditionally known to serve students who are at-risk of school failure. The United States Department of Education (2002) defines schools classified as alternative education schools as “a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides non-traditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 55). There has been a significant increase in the number of alternative education programs in the last fifty years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), there are 10,300 public school districts with district administered alternative schools or programs.

Data presented in Table 3 denotes a breakdown of the number of alternative schools and programs across the country. Characteristics are also provided to include the region, district enrollment, community type, and poverty concentration. Table 3 also provides information on whether the school or program is administered by a district, another entity, or combination of both.

There are various types of alternative educational settings. Alternative programs are usually sustained within an accredited school. Programs may be based within a traditional school, on the same campus as a traditional school, or at a different site within the school district. An alternative school is not affiliated with another traditional school; it has an official school number. In North Carolina, the school number is the sole determinant in distinguishing alternative programs from alternative schools.

Table 3

Percent of Districts with Alternative Schools and Programs for At-Risk Students, by Administering Entity and District Characteristics for School Year 2007-2008

District Characteristics	Alternative schools and programs administered either by the district or another entity	At least one alternative school or program administered solely by the district	At least one alternative school or program administered solely by another entity	Alternative schools and programs administered by both the district and another entity
All public school districts	64	40	35	12
District enrollment size				
Less than 2,500	54	27	34	7
2,500 to 9,999	86	67	35	31
10,000 or more				
Community Type				
City	94	87	44	37
Suburban	66	43	38	16
Town	77	55	34	12
Rural	56	29	34	8
Region				
Northeast	60	30	43	13
Southeast	90	76	26	11
Central	61	33	40	13
West	60	42	27	9

Table 3 (continued)

District Characteristics	Alternative schools and programs administered either by the district or another entity	At least one alternative school or program administered solely by the district	At least one alternative school or program administered solely by another entity	Alternative schools and programs administered by both the district and another entity
Percent Combined Enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific, Or American Indian/Alaskan Native Students				
Less than 6%	55	26	39	10
6 to 20%	66	42	36	13
21 to 49%	70	54	31	15
50% or more	73	54	30	11
Poverty Concentration				
Less than 10%	62	34	42	13
10 to 19%	62	38	36	12
20% or more	68	49	29	10

Note. There were a small number of cases for which poverty concentration was missing. Poverty estimates for school districts were based on Title 1 data provided to the U.S. Department of Education by the U.S. Census Bureau. Percents do not sum to the total percents of districts with alternative schools and programs administered either by the district or by another entity because districts could report using one or both types of alternative schools and programs. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), “District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs: 2007-2008” and “Follow-up District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs: 2007-2008, “FRSS 96, 2008.

School systems embrace the option of placing at-risk students in danger of failing or unable to successfully function in a regular educational setting in a separate setting. Separate settings assist students by providing a non-traditional method of acquiring an appropriate education, protect students in the regular educational setting from violent and excessively deviant behavior, meet state accountability standards and decrease the dropout rate. Similar to other students who attend alternative students, students with disabilities may not be best suited to be successful in a traditional school setting; this population can also greatly benefit from an effective alternative setting.

Of those who attend alternative schools, 12% had a disability (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). Most students attend alternative schools because they are unsuccessful in the traditional educational setting. They normally have exhibited deviant behaviors such as failing grades, truancy, and disruptive and/or aggressive behavior. Others attend due to situations such as homelessness and early parenthood.

In the study conducted by Booker and Mitchell (2011), minority students were significantly more likely than Caucasian students to be placed in a disciplinary alternative setting. They are also more likely to return to the setting within the same school year. There were differences found between boys and girls, but none between students placed in the special education program and those who were not.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) are defined as schools designed to serve students who demonstrate difficulty functioning at their home campuses (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). These schools are aimed at correcting or managing the behavior of disruptive students. DAEPs are not considered “schools of choice” because the enrollment is initiated by an administrative referral from the home school.

A nationwide survey conducted by the United States Department of Education suggested that there is a shortage of schools to meet the needs of at-risk students. Fifty-four percent of existing DAEPs had exceeded the maximum enrollment capacity from 1999-2001.

Understanding reasons students are placed might lead to a reduction in the referrals and an increase in student success at the home school (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Zero Tolerance policies, policies where students are suspended from school immediately for serious disciplinary incidents such as possession of weapons, were implemented by the Federal government in 1994 as a disciplinary tool to reduce violence in schools. Placement in DAEPs of students who violated the zero tolerance policy was mandatory after implementation. Zero tolerance policies expanded the discretion of administrators to “engage in the implementation of punitive and judicial forms of discipline.” These forms of discipline included in-school suspension, out of school suspension, placement in discipline alternative education programs, expulsion, and placement in juvenile justice programs (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

The offenses that warranted placement in discipline alternative education programs were much more serious in nature at the onset of this policy’s implementation. As time has progressed, the discretionary practices of administrators have shown that students are being recommended for placement at DAEPs for less serious infractions. A report by the Hogg Foundation reflected that, during the 2005-06 school year in Texas, 70% of DAEP placements were at the discretion of the home school (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Mandatory placement of students gave clear categories for behaviors that warranted disciplinary assignment. Discretionary placements allow administrators to determine if a student’s behavior warrants disciplinary assignment to an alternative setting. This use of discretion subjects more students to the possibility of disciplinary placement. Attention needs to

be given to the potential of bias and subjectivity when determining placement of students (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). It is also important to provide these students with this special attention before they make a decision to drop out of school.

The decision to drop out of school is not a “victimless” act. The effects of this decision are widespread. According to Lehr (2004), “Students with emotional or behavioral disabilities had the highest rate of dropout (51%), followed by students with learning disabilities (27%).” Not only do many high school dropouts experience adverse consequences such as feelings of depression, isolation, and drug/alcohol use; they are also more likely to resort to gang activity and violence (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). These are societal ills that result in increases in criminal activity, incarcerations, and unemployment. Many school systems have turned to alternative school enrollments to try and reduce these dropouts.

Enrollment in alternative schools is increasing each year; however, the research on student outcomes in alternative settings is limited. All alternative schools are not held to the same accountability standards creating difficulty in researching and collecting legitimate data. Further research is needed to measure student outcomes in alternative settings. Researchers question whether alternative schools are in existence to adequately serve the students enrolled or to serve traditional schools by providing an educational setting for students who disrupted the traditional learning environment and provide a place for “removal” of the problem.

Raywid (1999) proposes whether alternative programs served students, schools or school districts. Raywid suggests that there are three types of alternative schools.

1. Type I schools- Choice Schools, such as a Magnet School that have a strong emphasis on curriculum and instructional strategies.
2. Type II Schools- “Last-Chance” schools- are schools with a strong emphasis on

modification of student behavior. Interventions such as cool-out rooms, in-school suspension and varied placement terms are employed in these educational settings to deal with those with significant behavioral problems (Raywid, 1994).

3. Type III schools - schools with a strong emphasis on student remediation. Students are referred to this educational setting to address academic, social, and emotional deficiencies (Ryan, 2009). Students usually thrive in this educational setting.

This is evidenced through higher student achievement, better attendance and overall behavior (Gold & Mann, 1984). However, these results are often short-lived because the resources utilized in these settings usually are not replicated or available when students return to the traditional setting. Consequently, the negative behaviors are likely to recur (Raywid, 1994). According to Carver and Lewis, most alternative schools are a mix of Type II and Type III schools (Raywid, 1999).

“Since 2000, forty states and the District of Columbia have passed new laws or established new regulations related to alternative education,” demonstrating the magnitude of this issue (Almeida et al., 2010). Alternative school policies vary from state to state and are sometimes inconsistent with those of traditional schools. According to Almeida et al. (2010), there are seven policy elements that all states should integrate into their alternative education programs to ensure their effectiveness.

1. Broaden eligibility: Alternative education programs should serve all students in need of educational settings that would increase their chances for academic success, not just troublesome students who cannot function successfully in a traditional setting.

2. Clarify district roles and responsibilities: States should detail the standards of operation for all alternative programs and ensure that those standards are being implemented with fidelity.
3. Strengthen accountability for results: States should allow alternative programs to be flexible in their delivery of instruction, while maintaining the academic accountability standards placed on traditional schools.
4. Increase support for innovation: States should be willing to invest in various educational opportunities for students who need non-conventional methods to succeed academically.
5. Ensure high-quality staff: States should actively recruit, support, and retain highly qualified teachers and administrators to ensure alternative schools have the most qualified staff available for students in the greatest need.
6. Enhance student support services: States must understand that students in need of alternative education must have intense support in order to be successful. This support may have to come from outside sources, so funding should be provided to meet the vast needs of students.
7. Enrich funding: States must fund programs that will reignite students' desire for education while providing enrichment opportunities to assist them in continuing their education beyond graduation.

Forty states and the District of Columbia have enacted at least one of the aforementioned policy elements through legislation. Most states are only implementing one or two of the elements. The grim reality is that there are not any states that have embraced all seven of the policy elements by implementing an all-inclusive program to serve alternative education students

(Almeida et al., 2010). In 1999, the North Carolina State Board of Education established minimum standards and procedures for operating safe and orderly alternative learning programs and schools. The result is a variety of alternative educational settings. Alternative programs are usually sustained within an accredited school. Programs may be based within a traditional school, on the same campus as a traditional school, or at a different site within the school district. In 2000, more specific guidelines and procedures were enacted to ensure the proper implementation and maintenance of alternative learning programs/schools within each Local Education Agency.

The very nature of alternative education is to decrease the barriers that hinder the academic success of students who have experienced difficulties within the traditional school setting. To achieve these goals, each functioning school must develop a School Improvement Plan, a Safe School Plan as well as obtain approval from the Local Board of Education prior to establishing an alternative program/school (www.ncpublicschools.org, 2003).

According to (G.S. 115C-238.47), Alternative Learning Programs must:

1. describe the mission and goals of the program,
2. describe the services to be provided by the program,
3. describe the criteria for assignment to the program,
4. describe the process for ensuring that the assignment is appropriate for the student,
5. describe the process for the input and participation of parents in the exit/transition decision,
6. describe the process for ensuring a rigorous and high quality program,
7. serve students at any grade level,

8. serve students who demonstrate behaviors (i.e. academic, conduct, dropout, suspension, etc.) that put them at significant risk of school failure,
9. serve students selected by established procedures,
10. provide the primary instruction for students during the enrollment period,
11. offer course and class credit for attendance and grades in each assigned course,
12. assist students in meeting the requirements for grade promotion,
13. assist students in meeting the requirements for graduation,
14. participate in the State Accountability and Testing program as prescribed by law,
15. require attendance,
16. employ highly qualified instructors and serve students for a specific and extended period of time i.e., one grading period, quarterly, semester, etc. (This language does not include in-school suspension, short-term suspension, after/before school, tutorial, or drop-in programs. It does include extended day programs.)

In addition, North Carolina has adopted General Statutes as it pertains to alternative learning programs and schools; these General Statutes may be viewed in the Appendix D.

The school district in Southeastern North Carolina addressed school improvement plans in their board policies. Each school has the responsibility of creating a School Improvement Plan (SIP) to address all educational goals established by the Board of Education. This plan should include objectives, strategies, action steps, and a budget to ensure that students are receiving the necessary education within their schools to be college and career ready. The

success of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is based on input from school stakeholders, parents, business affiliates, students, and agencies. The SIP will receive guidance in terms of implementation and fidelity from the superintendent based on board policy. The principal of each school will be the lead in the implementation of the SIP.

The School Improvement Plan is divided into two essential components:

1. State Program for School-Based Management and Accountability: the board fully endorses that all children should conquer basic skills that will provide a foundation for future learning. The creation of the School Improvement Plan will solidify resources and curricula are provided to ensure that students within the educational process are performing at or above grade level competencies.
 - a. School Improvement Team (SIT): each school should have a SIT whose responsibility shall be to create and execute the School Improvement Plan. The school improvement team should include teachers, faculty, staff, administrators and parent representatives. Faculty and staff members selected for the School Improvement Team should be selected by peers via secret ballot. Once the SIT is selected the principal shall oversee implementation of plan and compliance of Open Meetings Law.
 - b. Mandatory Components of the School Improvement Plan (NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-A rural Southeastern Schools Board of Education Policy Manual)
 - i. The plan must specify the effective instructional practices and methods to be used to improve the academic performance of students identified as at-risk of academic failure or at-risk of

dropping out of school.

- ii. The plan must take into consideration the minimum annual performance goal established by the State Board and the goals set out in the mission statement for public schools adopted by the State Board of Education.
- iii. The plan must be, to the greatest extent possible, data driven. The team shall use the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) or a compatible and comparable system approved by the State Board of Education to analyze student data to identify root causes for problems and determine actions to address them and to appropriately place students in courses such as Algebra I (Math I). The plan must contain clear, unambiguous targets, explicit indicators and actual measures, and expeditious time frames for meeting measurement standards.

To comply with a School Improvement Plan's goal to most completely/effectively serve student needs, an alternative school/program has to consider unique challenges. "Avoidant students present a challenge to even the best schools and educators. Being persistent while maintaining a sense of hope is crucial because students often continue avoiding school only because they see no other option" (Casoli-Reardon et al., 2012). The properly structured alternative school could be the other option to help these at-risk students experience success. "The ultimate goal is to get students back to school and their education. If a child truly cannot go back to school after multiple efforts on many fronts an alternative high school might be the answer" (Casoli-Reardon et al., 2012). Casoli-Reardon, Rappaport, Kulick, and Reinfeld (2012)

state that students who avoid school may be grappling with many challenges in their efforts to end school avoidance. The authors' research identifies these students' needs and offers strategies to get them back in school. School avoidance is a multi-faceted problem that is often chronic and will require different interventions at various times (Casoli-Reardon et al., 2012). Causes of school avoidance can be broken down into the following four groups: cultural factors, family factors, peer factors, and neuropsychiatric factors (Casoli-Reardon et al., 2012). There are various evidence/strategies to address this issue such as mentors, modified school schedules, safe places, modified assignments, and extracurricular activities (Casoli-Reardon et al., 2012). Results from a Statement About Schools (SAS) Inventory suggest that alternative schools are more successful in meeting the needs of students than regular education schools. Students say that the specific factors or strategies that contributed to their lack of success in the regular education setting were: pace of the course, teachers, class size, and instructional methods. Developed based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs the Statement About Schools (SAS) Inventory assesses how well a school meets the needs of its students based on information provided by teachers and students. There was not sufficient evidence on what approach was used by alternative schools to meet the needs of its students, but a description of the approaches were presented (Retrieved from ncaccountabilitymodel.org).

Raywid (1999) indicated that the sole purpose of an alternative school was to provide support for students not being successful in comprehensive high schools in the areas of academic credit, career exploration activities, or vocational work experience, and extended teacher/peer support in an alternative setting where the ultimate goal is that of obtaining a high school diploma. The areas identified as support measures are coupled with methods that will motivate and inspire at-risk students. The motivation methods identified attempted to:

1. reduce the alienation and improve the self-concept of at-risk students,
2. provide at-risk students with increased access to desirable social roles,
3. increase community and parental participation in the education of at-risk students,
4. provide a flexible and integrated academic and vocationally oriented curriculum that emphasizes the importance of school in preparing for later life,
5. provide students with a success-oriented program to obtain academic and employability skills in a school environment,
6. provide a competency-based, self-paced, program with clear quantifiable objectives. Instruction will be provided in a variety of ways best suited to the individual student's needs, and
7. foster within students the responsibility for their own learning and the expectation that they will take an active role in setting their own goals.

Ianni (2009) utilized the Advocacy Design Center Model, ADC, in his dissertation to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative schools in Long Island, New York. This model was the result of collaboration between members of the faculty of Columbia University Teacher's College and Paterson Public Schools in New Jersey. The purpose of this model was to provide the public with insight on school practices, make necessary changes to those practices, and empower stakeholders; it would also serve as a liaison between all stakeholders to make informed decisions about day-to-day educational practices. The ADC allows stakeholders to explore the four components of learning institutions. Those elements are instruction, organization, governance, and accountability (Ianni, 2009).

According to Smith (2009), instruction refers to the methods in which information is imparted to students. Instruction is then broken down into two components - work and

knowledge. Work and knowledge are separated again into two additional components - behavioral and constructivist orientation. Behavioral work is when learning environments consist of students working independently of each other. The assignments/activities are usually worksheets or call and response type questioning. Constructivist orientation is a more collaborative learning environment where teachers incorporate student learning teams and students are allowed to learn through self-discovery. These learning environments are usually more rigorous in nature due to the absence of rote activities and more time-on-task activities (Smith, 2009). Organization refers to the culture of the schools based upon how people work together and the general organization of the school (Ianni, 2009). Organization - this element encompasses the overall structure of the school and how things and people function. According to Smith, “organization refers to the pattern of purposeful relations that exist among individuals within the boundaries of the school’s sphere of interest” (Smith, 2009). Leaders play a major role in the function of the organization, its priorities, and its successes. According to Ianni (2009), governance is defined as decisions and policies made and implemented at a school, to include who is involved in the decision making process. Lastly, accountability is the way that schools hold teachers and students responsible for their performance.

Behavioral knowledge is demonstrated when students are able to mimic what they observe their teachers doing. Constructivist orientation knowledge is when students are able to understand the concept but discover that there are various processes involved with finding solutions and “construct” their own knowledge. Students are able to use higher order thinking skills, thus making learning meaningful.

In an effort to ensure student achievement, staff members at Oakland schools in California formulated the projects based on what motivates each individual student. According

to Yocum, “It’s an attempt to reinvigorate them, and get them to look at academic work differently” (Cavanagh, 2012).

The results of a quasi-experimental mixed method experiment conducted in Texas named poor student-teacher relationships as a primary factor in their inability to be successful in traditional schools. The researches felt that, due to the varying demands placed on teachers, the ability to provide individualized attention was lacking. Students also felt that they were labeled by teachers and were subjected to the teacher’s pre-conceived notions of them. They also felt that teachers required respect from them but did not reciprocate respect to their students (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011).

Call Me Different, Not Difficult (2012) is a book authored by entrepreneur John Elder Robison. Although Mr. Robison shares strategies that teachers can adopt to help students who are autistic (as he himself is), many of the strategies mentioned are successful when working with at-risk and alternatively placed students. Six relevant strategies mentioned are: Tell students exactly what you want and say exactly what you mean, be consistent and predictable, be flexible in your conversational responses, expect good manners, pay attention to sensory issues, and be sensitive to our state of mind even if we seem oblivious (Robison, 2012).

Safety was another negative factor of traditional schools cited by students in this study. The students felt that they could not perform sufficiently in an environment in which they felt unsafe. They felt that many traditional school environments were hostile with multiple disciplinary infractions. Students also felt that rules were overly rigid in many traditional schools. They understood that rules were necessary in the school environment but they felt that there should always be flexibility. At-risk students cannot be subjected to cookie-cutter rules because they all have varying circumstances that need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

This mentality extended to their peer relationships. The cliques within the school caused them to feel uncomfortable and withdrawn. They had difficulties forming meaningful relationships with their peers because of the differences in their circumstances, sometimes turning to gangs for acceptance. It appears that the educational system has resorted to using alternative schools as a warehouse or “dumping ground” for underachieving students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors in traditional school settings (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011).

Alternative schools and programs differ from state to state. North Carolina differentiates between alternative schools and alternative programs due to funding and accountability standards. Most students enrolled in alternative schools are disengaged from education. They feel that external factors are the prevailing force that controls their fate and academic success. Disengagement, which is normally characterized by absenteeism, disruptive behavior, and poor academics, is a key indicator of a potential dropout (Ryan, 2009).

Some alternative schools counter these perceptions. Students noted positive teacher relationships, expectations of maturity, understanding of individual differences and circumstances, and supportive atmospheres as components of the alternative school that proved to be factors in their success. Kopp (2011) states, “for young people who have experienced consistent failure, that’s everything; knowing an adult believes in them even when they have given up on themselves.”

Based on research by Kochlar-Bryant et al. (2005):

1. States with alternative learning programs report that 19% to 60% of the students they serve have learning, emotional, and behavioral disabilities.
2. At least 40 states have implemented disciplinary Alternative Education

Programs to manage student behavior. Minority students are overrepresented in these alternative education programs.

3. Research has shown that quality long-term alternative education programs have positive effects on students' academic performance by reducing apathy and increasing self-esteem.
4. Alternative education programs are becoming a viable educational option for students at-risk of academic failure; therefore, the rate of students attending alternative schools, whether by choice or assignment, has doubled over recent years. The increase of students has prompted school officials to increase the academic standards of the alternative schools.

Due to the manifold needs of at-risk students, teachers who work in alternative schools must demonstrate strong instructional prowess in order to provide a viable opportunity for the students to be successful. "Alternative education reflects society's recognition that educational settings and models cannot be standardized and must be varied to allow each individual to find a learning environment in which they can successfully participate" (Kochlar-Bryant et al., 2005).

Many alternative learning programs abandon the guidelines observed in traditional schools to meet the needs of at-risk students. Innovations such as computer-based learning, distance education, community service projects, and real-world activities have been implemented to meet the varying needs of the students. These innovations are geared toward restoring the respect for the students, their parents and the community, while promoting the academic success of the students. According to Raywid (1999), researchers have witnessed various practices within the nation's alternative schools. While most adopt a common practice of

individualization, positive behavior management and student-centered education, Raywid (1999) derived that three models were prevalent amongst alternative programs:

1. **Restructured Schools:** Schools that may not specifically target at-risk students but embrace practices that benefit students who have challenges in traditional schools.
2. **Disciplinary Programs:** Programs designed for aggressive and/or disruptive middle and high school students. These educational settings provide students with individualized attention and programs designed to help them modify adverse behavior.
3. **Problem-Solving:** Schools explained as programs that specifically serve at-risk students. There is an intense desire to ensure student success and rehabilitation through compassion and positive reinforcement. There is less focus on punitive actions and more focus on the academic, social, and emotional success of the students (Kochlar-Bryant et al., 2005; Ryan, 2009).

According to Kochlar-Bryant et al. (2005), the following components are prominent in alternative schools that have contributed to student success.

1. **Comprehensive and Continuing Programs:** Students tend to benefit from long-term comprehensive programs rather than short term disciplinary assignments that result in their return to a traditional school setting within a matter of weeks or months. There is a systematic approach to planning and implementing a comprehensive/continuing program. Administrators, staff, and students are included in the planning process to achieve optimum success. Although academics are the primary focus, counseling is an integral component of the curriculum. Students actually set short and long-term goals toward their successful completion of school.

2. **Choice and Commitment:** There is a discernible partnership between students and teachers in alternative programs that prove successful for students. Choice is a prevailing theme. Students apply to attend. Parents are actively engaged in their child's educational experience. Students are held to high accountability standards. They set goals for themselves and are taught decision-making techniques that promote a positive self-image. Positive reinforcement is consistently utilized to encourage student attendance and achievement.
3. **Caring and Demanding Teachers:** This aspect of alternative education is paramount in ensuring student achievement and success. Teachers assume the role of educator, counselor, mentor and disciplinarian. Teachers hold students to high academic and behavioral standards. Teachers are clear and concise in their expectations and administrators are consistent in executing disciplinary actions in a fair and equitable manner. Students are exposed to a highly structured environment where the rules and expectations are made clear and consistently enforced. Teachers model the behavior expected of their students.
4. **Flexible Structures:** Students' individual schedules are considered and scheduling options are provided. Flexible schedules such as late arrival and departure, evening classes, computer-based learning, etc. are available to students. Grading procedures are customized. Students are given opportunities to resubmit substandard work to increase the chance of earning higher grades.
5. **Self-Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:** Students consistently engage in self-reflection activities, formative and summative assessments to gauge student progress.

Teachers also assess themselves and are consistently provided meaningful Professional Development opportunities to consistently improve their practices.

Funding for alternative programs is always challenging. Of the \$7.2 billion budget for North Carolina Schools, 3% of expended state funds services Alternative Programs and Services. This equates to 18.5% (\$254,192,424) of State funding in North Carolina (NCDPI, 2013). This fund is identified under the Categorical Allotment line item of the budget for North Carolina. This allotment provides services and support to special populations that include at-risk students. The funds are available to employ personnel to include: teachers, teacher assistants, and instructional support. The funds may also be extended to provide transportation, staff development, or to purchase supplies and materials (NCDPI, 2013).

According to the Informational Analysis report on North Carolina School Budget (2012), each LEA identified within the state receives the dollar equivalent of one resource officer (\$37,838) per high school. The remaining funds allow distribution based on ADM at 50% (\$79.51 per ADM) and 50% based on the number of poor children, per the federal Title I Low Income Poverty Data (\$357.64 per poor child). Lastly, the LEA receives approximately \$237,422, which equates to two teachers and two support personnel (NCDPI, 2013).

The Southern Regional Education Board (2006) has created a list of states and how they fund their alternative education programs (Southern Regional Board, as cited in NCDPI, 2013):

1. Arkansas: Alternative programs are funded through competitive grant process. For the 2004-2005 bienniums, \$3.8 million was allotted annually for grants.
2. Florida: Alternative programs are funded as part of dropout prevention. Funds allocated are based on the Florida Education Finance Program funding formula.

Dropout prevention has an additional program weight applied to the base student allocation in the early stages of the formula calculation.

3. Georgia: School districts are authorized to establish alternative programs for disruptive youth; however, there has been no additional assistance from the state until year of 1999-2000. The budget for 2004-2005 included \$32 million in general funds from lottery proceeds to support these grants.
4. Maryland: The state provided 16.3 million to establish a non-residential middle school for disruptive students in 2004-2005. There was an additional \$500,000 available for other alternative education programs.
5. Mississippi: School districts receive funds for alternative education based on a formula calculation. Those students participating in these programs are not counted as part of the regular average daily attendance in the minimum finance program.
6. Virginia: Alternative schools are provided for in two ways. First, districts with approved programs receive the basic level of funding for students in the alternative settings. Second, pilot programs for alternative education were established in four sites for the year 1999-2000. The 2005 legislature authorized expansion to include nine sites with \$15.6 million to be matched by districts based on local wealth.

Ultimately, human resources play a major role in the success of alternative schools, beginning with leadership. The most important decision that any leader will make is who to hire and who to fire (Dr. L. Mabe, personal communication, April 5, 2011). School climate and school leaders are essential to establishing successful alternative schools.

School Climate and School Leaders

Connecting with people and building relationships is a very important function for all

organizations and in education; this has a profound impact on school climate. Great leaders are always seeking potential candidates to strengthen their organization and the following factors usually help them in deciding who will be the best fit for the organization and meeting the needs of those served: attitude, generation, background, values, life experience, leadership ability (Maxwell, 2007, pp. 93-96). Important questions to examine as educational leaders are: Who is naturally attracted to each other, who have moved on and who have remained due to the leadership, and who will follow the leader when they go? These questions will help determine the law of magnetism as it applies to students in the school and the connections that they make daily. “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 102). Students are especially concerned about who cares about them and once they have a sense of care, they will bring one into their inner circle.

Maxwell points out that it is important for leaders to surround themselves with other leaders within their organization and outside their organization to serve as their mentors (Maxwell, 2007, pp. 118-119). Educational leaders need to do this as well, and need to serve as a mentor for the identified student leaders within a school that can help bring about positive change when they are empowered. Brendtro and Larson (2006) emphasize the importance of building caring and trusting relationships with students in order to be successful in *The Resilience Revolution* (pp. 55-57). Maxwell (2007) describes how great leaders cultivate and empower leaders to either lead within the organization or to move on and lead elsewhere (p. 119). Educational leaders must empower leaders within their school or district and nurture them to move on and become leaders elsewhere for the greater cause of improving education in the district, in the state, and in the nation. Additional leaders will help to create buy-in on a much greater scale.

“Once people have bought into someone, they are willing to give his vision a chance. People want to go along with people they get along with” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 147). Educational leaders need to be able to sell themselves to their school and district. They need to establish relationships and make all stakeholders believe in them before they will buy-in to any vision. Practice what is preached, visit churches, attend community events, and support the students to get the stakeholders to buy-in to the vision. Unity of vision, diversity of skills, and a leader dedicated to victory and raising players to their potential are the components of victory (Maxwell, 2007, pp. 161-162). Educational leaders need to celebrate the successes for the team and the students. Even small wins are victories and should be celebrated within schools and districts which will lead to momentum. Jaime Escalante, a well-known educator who achieved great success in working with at-risk youth and gang members, according to Maxwell (2007) used the law of motivation to achieve continued success (pp. 165-171). Educational leaders can apply this true story and law to their everyday goals of student achievement empowerment.

Priorities change depending on the school, environment, class, year, and other factors, but priorities are needed to be in line if educational leaders plan to accomplish anything. Maxwell (2007) gives three guiding questions to help get priorities in line: What is required? What gives the greatest return? What brings the greatest reward? One priority that should be constant is empowering students to lead to improve the school. This will require some of the adults in the school to sacrifice some of their power. “Effective leaders sacrifice much that is good in order to dedicate themselves to what is best” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 190). Educational leaders must be in the business to help kids, love kids, and have the passion needed in order to make sacrifices and do what is in the best interest of kids. Knowing when to empower and when to sacrifice are important timing decisions. “Reading a situation and knowing what to do are not enough to

make you succeed in leadership. Only the right action at the right time will bring success. Anything else exacts a high price. That is the Law of Timing” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 203). According to Maxwell (2007), this is the only reason that Jimmy Carter became president (pp. 193-195). Knowing when to implement and execute certain initiatives is important for educational leaders and this will lead to growth.

“Here’s how it works. Leaders who develop followers grow their organization only one person at a time. But leaders who develop leaders multiply their growth, because for every leader they develop, they also receive all of that leader’s followers” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 208). This is important in schools with the faculty, but especially with the students. Educational leaders who understand this can have a huge impact on turning around a school and creating a legacy. Maxwell (2007) points out those significant leaders empower and train future leaders to take over the organization when they are gone (p. 221). Educational leaders who truly care about the schools, districts, and communities that they serve will do this as well, and will truly create the leaders of tomorrow.

Therefore, excellent leadership within alternative schools is imperative to the success of the school. Furthermore, excellent leaders (school administration) will be able to use their leadership abilities to mentor and empower the youth of the school to lead for positive results.

High School Completion

High school completion rates represent the proportion of 18-through-24 year olds not enrolled in high school and have not received high school diploma (Labyer, 2004). According to Labyer, completion rates rose slightly from the early 1970s to the late 1980s but have remained fairly constant during the 1990s (Labyer, 2004). High school completion rates increased for White and Black young adults between the early 1970s and late 1980s but have remained

relatively constant in the 1990s. By 2000, 91.8% of White and 83.7% of Black, 18-through 24-year olds, had completed high school. Labyer (2004) stated that White and Asian/Pacific Islander young adults in 2000 were more likely than their Black and Hispanic peers to have completed high school.

Various estimates are conducted throughout the year in regards and are reported to the U.S. Department of Education under No Child Left Behind as well as to the National Center for Education Statistics (Barton, 2006). The following are some results provided by various researchers:

1. Jay Greene (Manhattan Institute) reported a high school completion rate of 71% for 1998
2. Christopher Swanson and Duncan Chaplin (Urban Institute) reported 66.6% for 2000
3. Thomas Mortenson (Postsecondary Education Opportunity) reported 66.1% for 2000
4. Andrew Sum and colleagues (Northeastern University) reported 68.7% for 1998
5. Walter Haney and colleagues (Boston College) reported 74.4% for 2001

Paul Barton (2006) completed a study that looked at the high school completion rates of other researchers in an effort to confirm the reported percentages. While conducting this research, Barton leaned upon the consensus count of the population cohort that would be of graduation age (17 or 18) in spring 2000 and the number of high school diplomas awarded that year by the National Center for Education Statistics (Barton, 2006). Barton was able to ascertain through this research that 69.6% of youth that were at the appropriate age of graduation received a diploma in 2000.

Further research has identified other challenges in regards to high school completion rates. Allensworth & Easton (2005) conducted a research study in Chicago that tracked students

based on their records. Based on this information, Black male students identified in this research study graduated at the rate of 19% by the age of 19. Latino male students were at a 58% graduation rate; whereas 58% of Caucasian male students. Female students in this study did somewhat better than their male counterparts with 57% for Black students, 65% for Latino and 71% for Caucasian (Barton, 2006).

A key area that is significantly impacted by educational attainment is annual income as indicated in Table 4. An individual annual income will increase or decrease based on the level of educational attainment. The more education one has, the more income they will earn; less education equates to less income. Colorado Department of Higher Education (2001) conducted a study on adults age 25 or over based on educational attainment. A major factor in high school completion data is that of attendance. Furthermore, attendance is greatly impacted by seat time requirements.

Attendance and Absences

The Compulsory Attendance law requires that every child between the ages of seven and sixteen years old attend school on a regular basis. This requirement is the responsibility of every parent and/or guardian (Retrieved from www.ncga.state.nc.us).

Students must be in attendance on a regular basis in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. The state of North Carolina requires students from ages 7-16 attend school regularly. The responsibility to ensure that students are in school resides with parents and guardians. The other responsibility to ensure regular attendance by students falls on the schools in the accuracy of record keeping on student attendance based on Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina.

Table 4

Earning Statistics According to Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment (25 and Over)	Median Earnings (2000)
Less than 9th grade	\$15, 241
9th-12th grade, no diploma	\$17,337
High school graduate	\$25,264
Some college	\$27,696
Associate degree	\$30,773
Bachelor's degree or more	\$43,683

Excused Absences are permitted when a student misses a day of school due to the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school,
2. isolation ordered by the State Board of Health,
3. death in the immediate family,
4. medical or dental appointment,
5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding,
6. a minimum of two days each academic year for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or student's parent(s),
7. participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page, with prior approval from the principal,
8. pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary, or
9. visitation with the student's parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the superintendent or designee, if the parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 4050, Children of Military Families; and (b) has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.

Excessive absences are not permitted because school attendance is an essential part of teaching and learning. If a student is absent from school five or more days within a semester, the principal or designated committee will determine if the student's grade will be decreased or not (NCSBA Legal/Policy Service policy.microscribepub.com---school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013). The following recommendations may be taken into account (NCSBA Legal/Policy Service policy.microscribepub.com---school district in Southeast

NC Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013):

1. the student will not receive a passing grade for the semester,
2. the student's grade will be reduced,
3. the student will receive the grade otherwise earned, or
4. the student will be given additional time to complete the missed work before a determination of the appropriate grade is made.
5. According to this policy, students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt (NCSBA Legal/Policy Service policy.microscribepub.com---school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013).

Some students are absent due to the need to take care of themselves and their families. Rules pertaining to attendance punish these students for making mature decisions or ones they may have no control over that have a great impact on their life because of circumstances due to socio-economic status. Many of these students endure an ongoing struggle to overcome the everyday poverty of their lives.

Another reason for frequent absences is suspensions. Student perceptions of suspensions are often that the suspension is a day off from school (Iselin, 2010). In order to effectively participate in educational environments students must possess certain abilities such as academic achievement, impulse and self-control, conflict management, and problem-solving regarding relationship issues (Retrieved from teachsafeschools.org). Since these students do not have coping mechanisms that assist in demonstrating positive outlets for their feelings, the inappropriate behaviors surface in the school setting and are punished repeatedly. Punishment is often suspensions resulting in putting these students at a further academic deficit.

A study conducted by Arcia (2007), supported that suspensions are given to the students who are already lacking in the area of academics and suspensions put these students at even higher risk for failure. Concerns regarding these matters have been identified by healthcare professionals (Committee on School Health, 2003). First, for school systems and community leaders to provide an environment and resources that decrease the incidents of student behaviors that result in suspensions. Second, lack of supervision and support offered to students when they are suspended. Third, the educational and learning opportunities that are missed when students are not in attendance at school, recognizing that education are directly connected to health and safety (Committee on School Health, 2003).

Disparities of Punishment Regarding Minorities and Genders

Iselin (2010), Hinojosa (2008), and Mendez and Knoff (2003) have researched the disproportionately that Black students are suspended more than White students. Most frequently suspended are African-American students who have been identified with emotional or behavioral disabilities (Iselin, 2010). Data collected by the Civil Rights Project (2010) regarding 9000 middle schools, reported an overall suspension rate of 11%; in the same schools, suspension rates for Black students averaged over 28%. Data provided by Hinojosa (2008), based upon the United States Department of Education, 2001, denotes that Black students comprise 17% of the school population, but make up 32% of the population that is suspended (p. 175).

Males are suspended at much higher rates than females from schools (Streitmatter, 1985-1986, p. 141). The discipline gap refers to the “tendency for African American students to be overrepresented in discipline in proportion to their enrollment, Hispanic students to be proportionally represented, and Caucasian and Asian students to be underrepresented” (Booker, & Mitchell, 2011). Students of color report perceiving discrimination as it relates to disciplinary

treatment. The disparities in how discipline is handled for diverse populations in other forms of discipline are well documented. African-American students are more frequently referred to the office than Caucasian students (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Research by Booker and Mitchell (2011) indicates that Caucasian students are referred to the office for specific infractions such as smoking, vandalism, truancy, while African-American students are referred for more subjective infractions such as disrespect and threats. Boys are more likely than girls to receive an office referral. Disproportionate rates for suspensions are consistent with office referrals. Boys are more likely to be referred and suspended than girls are (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

In a study conducted by Mendez and Knoff (2003), African-American students were disproportionately represented in out-of-school suspensions than Caucasian and Hispanic students. African-American students were disproportionately suspended for infractions such as insubordination, disruptive behavior, and fighting. Caucasian students were disproportionately suspended for tobacco, weapons, drug, and alcohol possessions (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Mendez and Knoff (2003) indicated that the rates of suspension of students increase when they enter middle school and decrease in high school. This study did not address the distinction between regular education students and students with disabilities.

Data released by the U.S. Department of Education (1993), urban districts with higher populations of minority students were more likely than suburban and rural districts to have alternative schools for at-risk students. Districts with high minority populations were also more likely to disciplinary assign students for behavioral issues only, rather than other at-risk factors such as truancy, parenthood, or mental health issues. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that minority students are more at-risk of disciplinary assignment to an alternative school for

discretionary reasons. Students placed in the special education program that were assigned to DAEPs were proportionate to the overall population of students with disabilities (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Limited research on the perceptions of at-risk students who attend alternative schools exists. Few researchers have sought to understand the perspectives and opinions of at-risk students attending alternative schools through quantitative research methods (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). There is an evident need for both quantitative and qualitative research on the perceptions of at-risk students and the components of the alternative schools they attended that helped them succeed in ways traditional schools did not.

At-risk students tend to struggle academically and perform significantly lower on standardized tests than their peers. Due to the academic challenges confronting at-risk students, the likelihood to drop out of school is much greater than those not considered at-risk. The population of students classified as “at-risk” continues to increase within our schools. For example, in 2005, ethnic minority groups comprised 42% of the entire student population (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011).

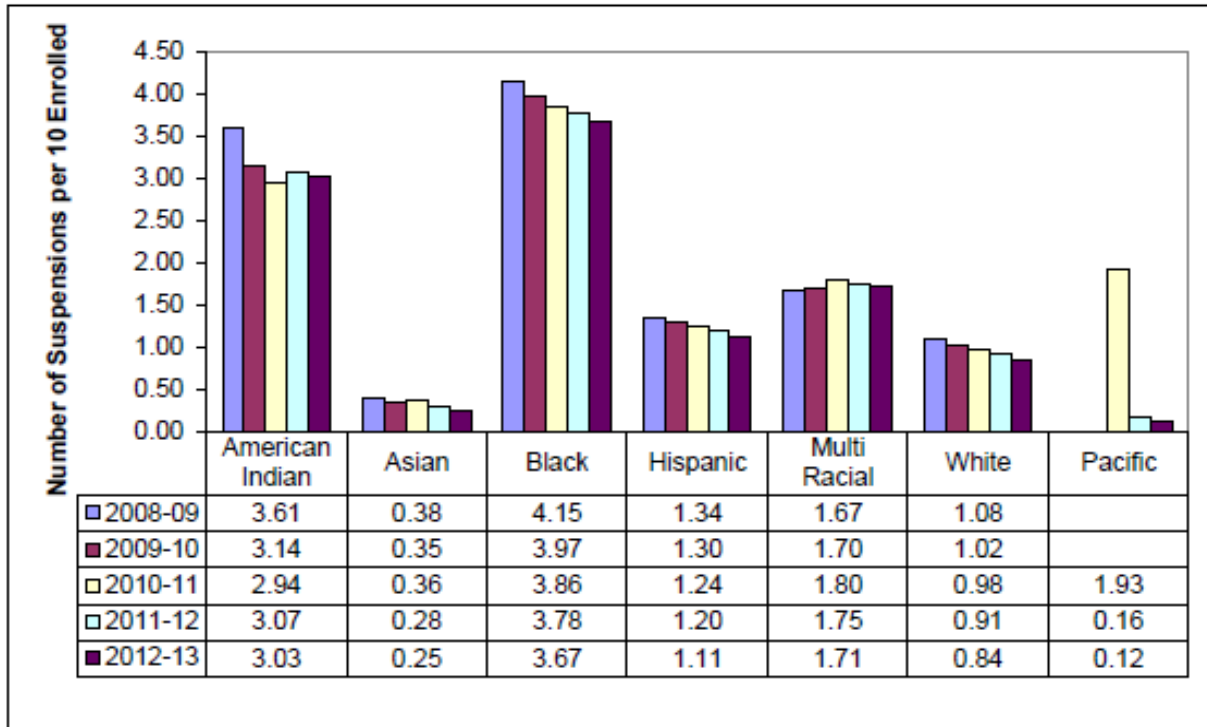
Table 5 shows the disparity in students between race/ethnicity and gender. Demonstrated in this chart is that proportionally minorities and males are suspended at a much higher rate than their peers. Figures 21-23 show that the disparity in students between race/ethnicity and gender that exist nationwide also holds true in North Carolina. Demonstrated in these charts that were released by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April of 2014 is that proportionally minorities and males are suspended at a much higher rate than their peers (Retrieved from

Table 5

School Suspension by Race/Ethnicity/Gender

Total N	By Race/Ethnicity		By Gender
	% in Total Populations	% Represented in Suspensions	% Represented in Suspensions
SCHOOL A 1843			
	White	93.2	93.1
	Black	.6	0
	Hispanic	4.9	6.8
SCHOOL B 2001			
	White	76.8	72.4
	Black	5.7	6.6
	Hispanic	13.9	21.1
SCHOOL C 1911			
	White	32.6	25.5
	Black	7.8	15.3
	Hispanic	53.4	21.1

Note. (Suspensions by Strietmatter, 1985-1986, p. 141). The minority groups of Native Americans and Asians were not included due to small numbers.



Note: Race/Ethnicity was not reported or was reported as “Other” for 2,069 short-term suspensions in 2008-09, 1,776 in 2009-10, 77 in 2010-11, 110 in 2011-12, and 264 in 2012-13. Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ethnicity category and multiplying by ten.

Figure 21. North Carolina short-term suspension rates by race/ethnicity.

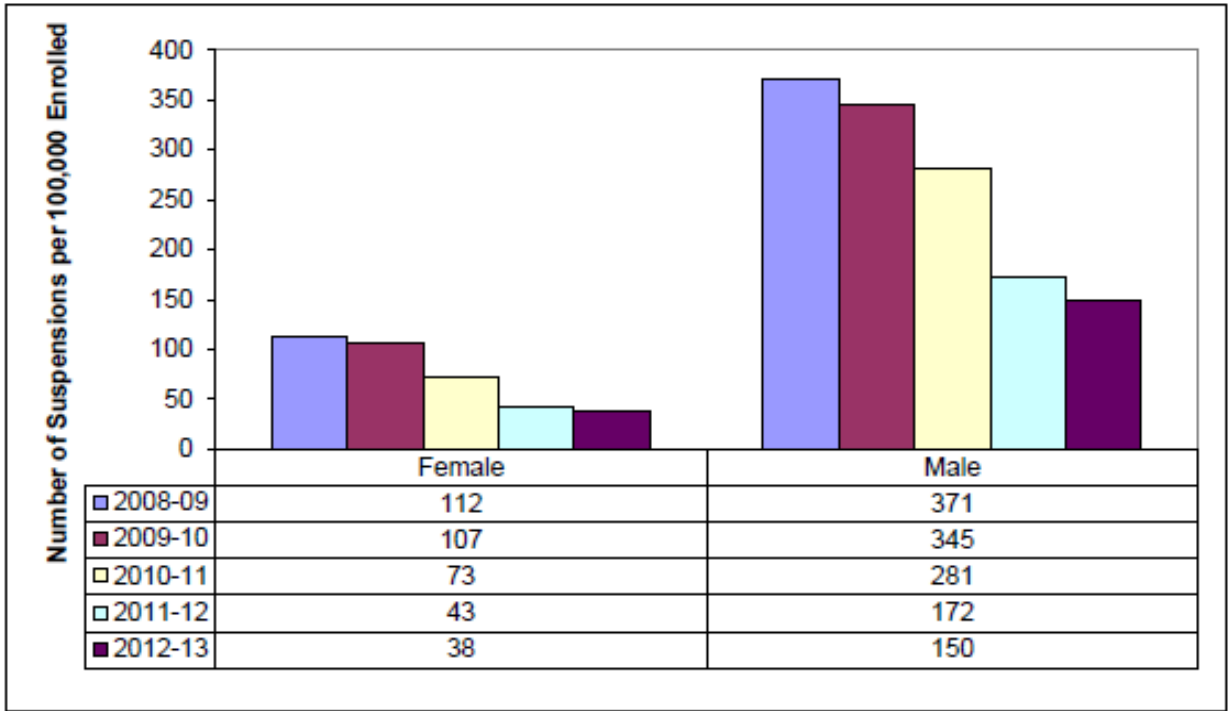
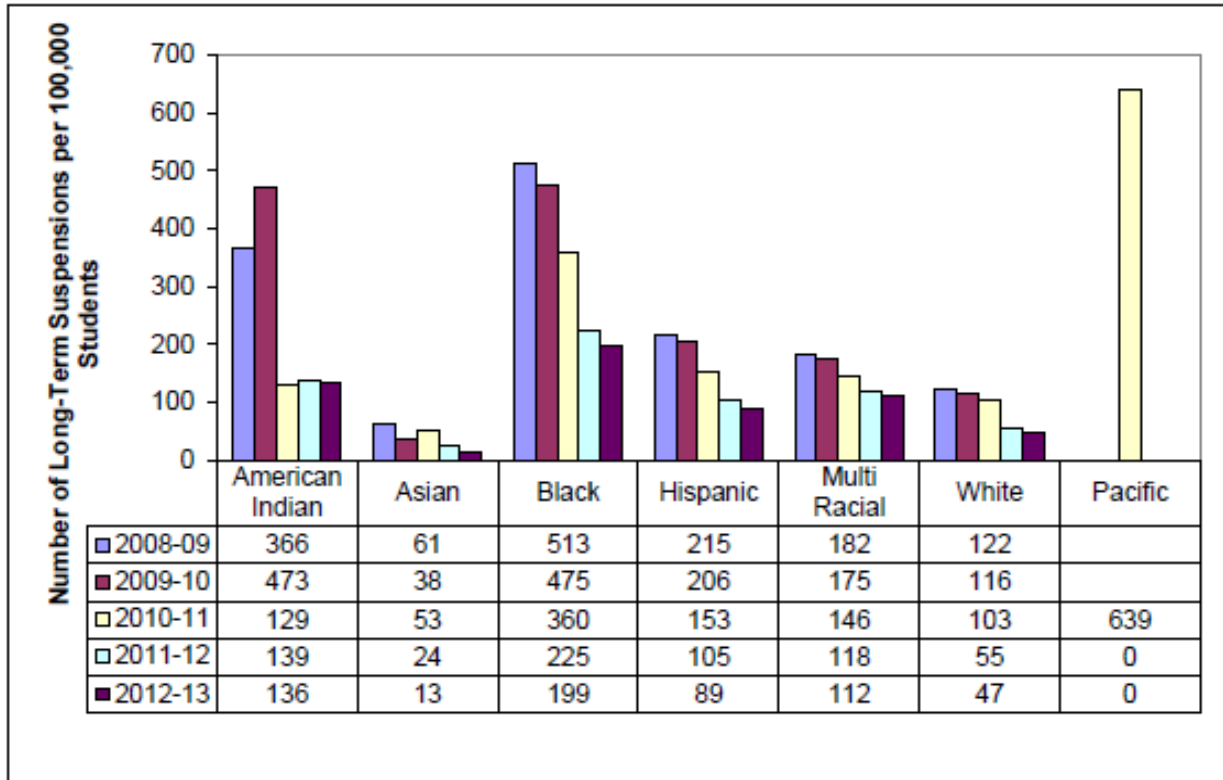


Figure 22. North Carolina long-term suspension rates by gender.



Note: Race/Ethnicity was not reported or was reported as "Other" for 29 suspensions in 2008-09, 44 suspensions in 2009-10, two suspensions in 2010-11, and five suspensions in 2012-13. Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ethnicity category and multiplying by 100,000.

Figure 23. North Carolina long-term suspension rates by race/ethnicity, LTS per 100,000.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>).

An analysis of a study by Arcia (2007) indicated that common factors exist that reinforce the incongruence of suspension rates between Black students and their non-Black peers. Characteristics include the schools that have a high percentage of suspensions overall, to include non-Black students, a difference in achievement existed between Black and non-Black students, and the instructional staff was inexperienced (Arcia, 2007). According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2012), in 2012-2013 and historically, Black and American Indian males, and special education students were suspended at a higher rate than other demographics in North Carolina (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>, p. 23). Understanding the background of school suspensions, including the causes and effects, help to understand the disparities discussed above.

Schools Suspension Background, Causes, and Effects

Violence in schools is a topic of national debate following recent current events. When examining violence in schools, discipline procedures are scrutinized and analyzed. Discipline is crucial in schools in order to maintain order and provide a constructive learning environment. The Guns Free School Act (1994) prompted schools to implement “zero-tolerance” policies. Resulting from this zero-tolerance ideology, many states developed guidelines outlining school behaviors that would or could result in school suspensions or expulsions. To ensure the success of the educational process and provide procedures and process for a safe and orderly environment, the North Carolina General Assembly has recognized the need for tools for teachers and school officials in regards to maintaining discipline. To that end, the General

Assembly also recognizes the removal of students from schools will increase behavioral problems, diminish academic achievement, and increase dropout rates. Discipline has to maintain balance within the school setting to allow for teaching and learning to take place successfully.

Discipline Policies (Retrieved from www.ncleg.net):

1. Local boards of education shall adopt policies to govern the conduct of students and establish procedures to be followed by school officials in disciplining students. These policies must be consistent with the provisions of this Article and the constitutions, statutes, and regulations of the United States and the State of North Carolina.
2. Board policies shall include or provide for the development of a Code of Student Conduct that notifies students of the standards of behavior expected of them, conduct that may subject them to discipline, and the range of disciplinary measures that may be used by school.
3. Board policies may authorize suspension for conduct not occurring on educational property, but only if the students' conduct otherwise violates the Code of Student Conduct and the conduct has or is reasonably expected to have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the schools or the safety of individuals in the school environment.
4. Board policies shall not allow students to be long-term suspensions or expulsions for specific violations unless otherwise provided in State or federal law.
5. Board policies shall minimize the use of long-term suspension and expulsion by restricting the availability of long-term suspension or expulsion to those violations deemed to be serious violations unless otherwise provided in State or federal law.

Evidence does not support that suspensions deter behaviors (www.teachsafeschools.org). The Committee on School Health (2003) identified that between 79% and 94% of schools have policies based upon the “zero-tolerance” concept and that 90% of Americans are in support of these established policies. Research on suspensions has expanded over the last 30 years.

Regarding suspensions, it is impossible to determine that one factor causes an outcome. One cannot surmise that a school’s culture causes high or low suspension rates. One can, however, associate characteristics with outcomes. Suspensions are considered effective in removing disruptive students from the learning environment, heightening the awareness of inappropriate student behavior to parents, allowing a sense of relief to frustrated staff and students.

Research has been conducted for many years regarding the effectiveness of using suspension from schools as a means of a disciplinary method. Nationally, suspension rates have been on an increase over the past decade. According to Lee, Cornell, Gregory, and Fan (2011), over 3.3 million students are suspended out-of-school every year. According to teachsafeschools.org, the Chicago school system suspended more than 20,000 students in 2003, doubling the amount from the previous decade; programs that are alternatives to suspensions have been implanted in many school districts nationally. When examining the effects of suspension, factors that contribute to the behaviors that result in suspensions must also be analyzed. American schools frequently use suspensions, both out-of-school and in-school, as a common disciplinary action. Suspension, with no additional support or interventions, has not proven to result in change in behaviors for the long term (Mati, 2011). Iselin’s research (2010) supported that the higher frequency of suspensions has a correlation with greater likeness of future involvement of the repeatedly suspended students in the juvenile justice system and the

students' demonstration of antisocial behaviors. Cicek's (2012) research shares that students are often suspended without any proactive interventions or follow up evaluation to address the underlying issues.

An example of proactive interventions is using various behavior support programs decreased office referrals and suspensions (Iselin, 2010). Identified by Mati (2011) was the importance of a positive relationship between teachers and students in influencing positive choices regarding behaviors. Achievement and safety in schools improved when school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) were adopted, along with reduced suspensions (Civil Rights Project, 2010). By suspending students it impacts school climate negatively and does not promote social growth to change behaviors that originally caused the suspension (Skiba & Peterson, 2003).

Based upon data from the Civil Right Project (2010), behaviors that suspensions were typically given were for offenses other than serious violence, drugs, or weapons. Suspensions were frequently given for non-violent offenses such as unacceptable language, dress-code violations, disruptions, and truancy (Civil Rights Project, 2010). Arcia (2007) stated that, frequently, suspensions were used for minor infractions or the repetition of minor violations and that an alternative not as academically crippling should be explored. Examined by Cicek (2012) were an assortment of Student Code of Conduct Handbooks, from various states and areas. A comprehensive list of offenses were compiled to be able to examine the offenses that resulted in suspensions with no prior intervention and many being non-violent (Cicek, 2012). According to Marchbanks et al. (2013), "If the state were able to reduce the effects of discipline on likelihood of dropping out by 13, the level associated with school discipline, the total savings would be between \$711 million and \$1.3 billion" (p. 19).

Appendix E contains policies as they relate to the discipline data that has been collected are from the county in rural North Carolina and their policies are adapted from the policies written by the North Carolina School Board Association. Noted in these policies are the identified non-violent behaviors that result in out of school suspensions, in school suspensions, expulsions, and placements in alternative programs. No follow up support is identified to address the root cause of the adolescent's behaviors.

While out-of-school suspensions completely remove students from the educational setting, there has been a trend in schools to address discipline issues with in-school suspension. However, the degree to which in-school suspension programs use research based strategies to help rehabilitate discipline issues varies greatly. Therefore, it is important to note that in-school suspensions have a huge impact on at-risk students.

In-School Suspensions and Other Alternatives

In-school suspension (ISS) is also used as a discipline option in schools. By using in-school suspension the students are at least provided supervision and many programs require the students to complete their classroom work while they are there. In-school suspensions can serve the same purpose as out-of-school by removing the problematic student from the classroom, but does not reward the bad behavior by sending them home to often unsupervised situations (Patterson, 1985, p. 98).

Johnston (1987) suggests creating an in-school suspension environment that has high expectation for school work completion and self-discipline and a structured, accepting environment, rather than viewed as a place for punishment (p. 122). Most commonly, students were sent to ISS for skipping classes and disruptive behaviors (Johnston, 1987, p. 123). Students

were surveyed by Johnston (1987) regarding their perceptions of ISS and the majority of students responded that it was necessary and effective (p. 129).

Presented by Morris and Howard (2003) is the importance of counseling as part of an effective ISS program (p. 157). According to Guindon, an ISS program that is inclusive of counseling services aids students in behavioral reflection (as cited in Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 157).

Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, and Rime (2012) conducted a case study regarding an alternative to suspension (ATS) program. A Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) Team developed a list of consequences other than suspensions as follows:

1. Self-management plan
2. Debriefing and reflection assignments
3. Behavior contracts
4. Natural consequences
5. Individualized social-emotional training/learning
6. Counseling
7. Parent Involvement
8. Intervention rooms/in-school suspension

Results were that suspensions were reduced, compared to other years (Chin et al., 2012).

The improvement noted may be attributed to the “Hawthorne Effect”. Defined as people’s social behavior being impacted by the behaviors of others around them, which also impacts their own innate ability (“The Hawthorne Effect”, 2008).

Also, suggested by Peterson (2005), are ten alternatives to suspensions:

1. Problem solving contracting

2. Restitution
3. Mini-courses or skill modules
4. Parent involvement/supervision
5. Counseling
6. Community service
7. Behavior monitoring
8. Coordinated behavior plan
9. Alternative programming
10. Appropriate in-school suspension

A few of these strategies are being used by some schools; but limited numbers are using most of these strategies and even less are using it as a systemic strategy to improve behaviors that are expressed as school expectations (Peterson, 2005, p. 11). Offered as alternatives to suspensions that were examined by the Committee on School Health (2003) were parents being required to accompany the offending student during the school day and community service after school hours. Schools must focus on classroom management if they plan to reduce the number of suspensions.

Classroom Management and Behavioral Sciences

Classroom management plays a significant role in the rate of suspension of students. Schools that serve the greatest population of high risk students typically have the highest turnover rates of staff and the most novice teachers (Newsandobserver.com, 2011).

One of the common issues that many educators identify as most challenging is classroom management, especially those new to the practice of teaching. Consistently teachers deal with this issue in their effort to successfully educate children. How a teacher manages a classroom or

how an administrator manages a school is often an extension of that individual's personality. Therefore, psychology has a major impact on how a school or classroom is managed. Understanding this, one must conclude that increasing knowledge of the major psychological theories that shape educational practice is imperative to being a successful administrator with a well-managed school. Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) apply the theories of behaviorism and humanism, two major camps in the field of educational psychology, to school-wide management.

Brookover et al. (1982) stated that "faculty and administration must share the responsibility for creating an orderly learning climate in which academic pursuits are not disrupted." Goodwin and Miller (2012) make the claim that everyone, from the principal on down, is expected to model and encourage appropriate behavior in *For Positive Behavior, Involve Peers*. They state that, "The best approaches to behavior management don't simply zero in on problems after they occur but proactively enlist everyone in the school to establish and reinforce clear expectations for student behavior" (Goodwin & Miller, 2012). The authors state that the following have roles for establishing positive behavior in a school: the administrator's role is creating an oasis of safety, the teacher's role is establishing a positive classroom culture, and the student's role is providing peer support (Goodwin & Miller, 2012). Goodwin and Miller (2012) go on to state that, "Research suggests that students who challenge us require a mix of supports," and that "Student behavior can be improved by creating a positive peer culture". This is essential in an alternative school setting.

William Sterrett (2012) seeks to answer the question, "What can school leaders do to support teachers in building stronger relationships with students?" in *From Discipline to Relationships*. He states that, "In our evolving world of education, one thing remains constant:

our success hinges on our ability to build effective relationships with students” (Sterrett, 2012). Sterrett (2012) offers personal examples from his time as a principal to reduce discipline by building relationships and “creating classroom communities,” while providing educators with the support and professional development needed to accomplish this. “Moving from a focus on discipline to a focus on relationships has implications for all stakeholders. For students it clearly sends the message, you belong here...For parents, the implications are enhanced communication and a greater focus on their student as an individual” (Sterrett, 2012). According to research by Henderson and Berla (1994), when student’s parents are involved in school the students have increased academic performance and high school graduation rates and less behavior problems.

Behaviorism is a field of psychology that focuses on how the environment evokes specific reactions from people. This field of psychology can be traced back to Ivan Pavlov and his theory of operant conditioning. Behaviorists believe that changing the environment can produce changes in human behavior. Thus, if an educator desires a change in student behavior, then the school environment must be changed. The leading proponent of applying behaviorism to education is B.F. Skinner. Skinner believes that, “almost all living things act to free themselves from harmful contacts” (Skinner, 1971, p. 36). Therefore, students can be controlled through the consequences of their environment, positive and negative reinforcement (Skinner, 1971, pp. 36-37).

An example of positive reinforcement would be an exciting activity sponsored by the school administration at the end of the week for students who accumulated a designated number of positive points. This reinforcement would evoke the students to have positive behavior because they desire to go to the school activity. An example of negative, or aversive, reinforcement would be students having positive behavior because they do not want to have their

parents called by the teacher. Both positive and negative reinforcement use the environment to control the behavior of the students. Behaviorists argue that students wish to escape aversive controls and that inner states such as feelings, emotions, and desires do not have an impact on the behavior of the students because these are not measurable changes in behavior, therefore, they are only convenient myths that are proposed by humanist thinkers (Skinner, 1971, pp. 40-41).

“In the minds of most behavioral scientists, man is not free, nor can he as a free man commit himself to some purpose, since he is controlled by factors outside of himself” (Rogers, 1983, p. 42). Humanism is in direct contrast to behaviorism because humanists believe that individuals have an understanding of their own behavior and therefore, individuals are free to make choices. The choices that individuals make are often based on inner feelings (Rogers, 1983, p. 45). Behaviorists disregard these inner feelings because they argue that such feelings are not measurable by the scientific method. However, many humanist disagree by asserting that, “none of what we do is caused by any situation or person outside of ourselves . . . what goes on in the outside world never makes us do anything” (Glasser, 1986, pp. 18-19). William Glasser compiles his book, *Choice Theory in the Classroom*, from a humanist perspective and argues that by helping students understand their choices, and that better choices exist, an educator can increase positive behavior among the students. Gerald Gutek (2004) also holds a similar belief that is evident in the following statement, “The years of adolescence and youth . . . is the time when young people begin to understand that making choices is what life is about” (p. 89). Rogers (1983) states that everything can be taken from a man but his ability to choose his own way and decide his own attitude (p. 45).

Robert J. Marzano (2003) identifies motivation as a major factor that accounts for student achievement (p. 124). PBIS seeks to motivate students to have positive behavior and to excel

academically by applying the theories of behaviorism and humanism. PBIS applies behaviorism theories through the use of a positive reward system. PBIS also applies the theories of humanism by teaching students character traits that will help them analyze situations that they may encounter so that they may make better choices. While behaviorism and humanism are two distinctively different psychological camps, PBIS effectively applies the theories of both to assist in school-wide management.

As stated by Emmer, teachers with a lack of experience may resort to an authoritative disciplinary method of classroom management sometimes resulting in fight or flight situations between themselves and students (as cited in Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p. 336). Often the lack of behavioral strategies may be due to lack of teacher professional development, even though classroom management is rated as highly important by both teachers and administrators (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p. 337).

Ross W. Greene (2010), in *Calling All Frequent Flyers*, states that if a school discipline program is not working, then collaborative problem solving may be the key to repairing the program. He makes the claim that punitive discipline systems do not work with today's youth, "Rewards and punishments don't teach kids the skills they lack." Ross makes a very important point, as it would relate to the staffing of a school, "The behaviorally challenging students being sent with great regularity to the office aren't the only frequent flyers in the building. The teachers sending them are frequent flyers, too."

Behaviorism and humanism are different, the proponents of each make very good arguments as to why their method is superior, thus educators are still debating this issue of which theory should shape educational practice. Should behaviorism or humanism shape educational practice? The ideal conclusion is to apply both methods – PBIS does this effectively.

All humans have choices and for every choice, there is a positive or negative consequence. Behaviorism should be used to help control certain behaviors through the use of positive and negative reinforcement. PBIS uses positive reinforcement to help control and promote desired behaviors at school. However, educators should understand that many students are in fact filled with emotions and feelings that may cause their behaviors to be uncontrollable through the use of behaviorist techniques. The best method of addressing this issue is to supplement behaviorist techniques with humanist techniques.

Humanist techniques help students understand why they make the choices they make and show students that by making better choices, they will reap the benefits of desired positive outcomes; this is another important aspect of PBIS. A good example of this humanist thinking that dates back for many years is the story of Job in the *Bible*; regardless of how much was taken from Job or how much his environment changed, he maintained a positive attitude. Instilling the choice to maintain a positive attitude such as Job, in the minds of students, is the goal of humanist educators in attempting to best help shape educational practice.

Through the use of both behaviorism and humanism, positive outcomes of classroom and school-wide management will increase. PBIS does an excellent job of linking these two psychological camps to address many needs within a school. Teachers and staff receive staff development in positive reinforcement and a new tool for classroom management, which results in less classroom disruptions due to discipline. Positive behaviors are occurring in the classrooms, which allows for increased time-on-task and results in improved delivery of curriculum and instruction. Students are gaining more from experiences in the school and in the classroom, which improves their learning. This also leads to a positive school climate with an inviting atmosphere for all stakeholders. Parents and community members have opportunities to

be involved in the school in exciting ways through the PBIS program. All of these effects result in increased teacher satisfaction, retention, and effectiveness. PBIS, if properly implemented and molded to meet the needs of a given school, will ultimately result in an administrator's ability to effectively and efficiently manage a school to reach its fullest potential.

Methods such as these must also be used to increase the desire of all students to be present in school. The inability to rehabilitate discipline problems and build positive relationships with students leads to increased senses of not belonging. Their participation in school continues to decline until ultimately they dropout, negatively impacting dropout rates.

Dropout Rates

Student dropout rates are the "silent epidemic" the United States is presently facing and it is controlling our communities, schools, and society. This "Silent Epidemic," as it is regularly referred to, is the high school dropout issue that confronts all Americans in some way or another. According to a report by Civic Enterprises, one third of all public high school students and approximately one half of Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans fail to graduate on time with their original classmates. Based on a report the majority of these students abandon school with two or less years of schooling remaining prior to obtaining their high school diploma (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006).

This epidemic continues to rear its ugly head even though education has been on the public agenda for the past few decades. Margarita Donnelly (1987) states that educational reform has changed the rules before the system has had a chance to accommodate to an increasing number of students who are dropping out and becoming a burden to society. Others believe it is due to incorrect and inappropriate data, believing that the public has been deceived about the severity of this problem and the number of dropouts continues to grow in our society.

Research conducted by Costenbader and Markson (1994) noted that reporting by school administrators was between 51% and 55% of students who dropped out of school had been suspended during their school careers (p. 107). Peterson (2005) points out research that the suspension of students does not deter or change behaviors, but instead puts the student academically further behind and at greater risk of dropping out of school (p. 10).

Once a student decides to drop out of school their life ultimately takes a downward spiral to despair. According to many reports, dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced, and single parents with children who drop out from high school as well (Donnelly, 1987). These students are now referred to as at-risk students. At-risk students are defined as students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts (Donnelly, 1987). According to Donnelly (1987), at-risk students tend to be low academic achievers who also exhibit low self-worth. She goes on to say that unbalanced numbers of these students are males and minorities, and generally, they come from families of low socioeconomic status. Students who occupy both low income and minority status are at higher risk, potentially due to the fact that many of them have parents of low educational backgrounds and who may not have high educational expectations for their children. Furthermore, at-risk students tend not to participate in school activities and have a minimal identification with the school. These students have disciplinary and truancy problems that lead to credit problems and they exhibit impulsive behavior and their peer relationships are problematic. Family problems, drug addictions, pregnancies, and other issues prevent them from participating successfully in school (Donnelly, 1987). As they experience failure and fall behind their peers, school becomes a negative environment that reinforces their low self-esteem.

Karen Gavigan and Stephanie Kurtts (2010) identified data that was collected as a result of federal and state legislation. This data was a good indicator of which students were meeting standards and which students were most at-risk. For example, the White House reported that approximately half of our dropouts are Latinos and African American students (CNN.com, as cited in Gavigan & Kurtts, 2010, p. 10). Also, as a consequence of the large dropout rate, it is estimated that the United States loses almost \$320 billion in potential earnings each year (CNN.com, as cited in Gavigan & Kurtts, 2010, p. 10).

Communities are also negatively impacted by the dropout issue. The loss of productive workers and the higher costs associated with increased incarceration, health care, increased gang memberships, and social services are by-products of the dropout issue. This leads many educators, administrators, parents, and political figures to wonder why so many students decide to make this decision to drop out of school. During their early school years, students have dreams and aspirations that they want to conquer and achieve, but many ultimately decide to put those dreams off and go in another direction. What can we do to increase the number of students that are deciding to pursue a high school diploma? Once at-risk students have been identified, the challenge is to implement comprehensive school-wide initiatives for keeping them in schools and to close the existing achievement gap. Leadership must be chosen that supports this philosophy.

Civic Enterprises (2006) cited a number of reasons that students drop out of school to include: a lack of connection to the school environment, a perception that school is boring, feeling unmotivated, academic challenges, and the weight of real world events. A report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides the following insight as it relates to why students drop out

(Bridgeland et al., 2006):

1. Nearly half (47%) said a major reason for dropping out was that classes were not interesting. These young people reported being bored and disengaged from high school. Almost as many (42%) spent time with people who were not interested in school.
2. Nearly 7 of 10 respondents (69%) said they were not motivated or inspired to work hard, 80% did an hour or less of homework, 80% did one hour or less of work each day in high school, two-thirds would have worked harder if more was demanded of them (higher academic standards and more studying and homework), and 70% were confident they could have graduated if they had tried.
3. Many provided personal reasons for leaving school. A third (32%) said they had to get a job and make money; 26% said they became a parent; and 22% said they had to care for a family member. Many of these young people reported doing reasonably well in school and had a strong belief that they could have graduated if they had stayed in school. Also, these students were the most likely to say they would have worked harder if their schools had demanded more of them and provided the necessary support.
4. About 35% of the students surveyed said that “failing in school” was a major factor for dropping out; three out of ten said they could not keep up with school work; and 43% said they missed too many days of school and could not catch up (Lehr, 2004).
5. Approximately 32% were required to repeat a grade before dropping out and 29% expressed significant doubts that they could have met their high school’s requirements for graduation even if they had put in the necessary effort.

6. Ranging from 59% to 65% of respondents missed class often the year before dropping out. Students described a pattern of refusing to wake up, skipping class, and taking three hour lunches; each absence made them less willing to go back. These students had long periods of absences and were sometimes referred to the truant officer, only to be brought back to the same environment that initially led them to become disengaged.

Another study that provided insight to the silent epidemic is the 2012 High School Dropouts in America survey. This survey was conducted by Harris/Decima, which is a division of the Harris Interactive, on behalf of Everest College. The rationale for conducting this survey was to provide some insight to policymakers and educators in an effort for them to gain a clearer understanding of why students are dropping out and what could be done to re-engage students and increase high school graduation rates nationally. Graduation rates are great indicators of whether the programs implemented in schools are really working (Ryan, 2009). The research provided information from participants ranging in age from 19 to 35. The total number of adults surveyed was approximately 513 and they responded to the following question: “Which, if any, of the following reasons prevented you from finishing high school?” The following are the responses to that question:

1. Absence of parental support or encouragement (23%)
2. Becoming a parent (21%)
3. Lacking the credits needed to graduate (17%)
4. Missing too many days of school (17%)
5. Failing classes (15%)
6. Uninteresting classes (15%)

7. Experiencing a mental illness, such as depression (15%)
8. Having to work to support family (12%)
9. Bullied and did not want to return (12%)

The survey, which was conducted in October of 2012, identified that 55% of the participants began looking into the GED equivalency program, thus opting to drop out and attain a GED as opposed to graduation from high school and contributing to the dropout rate numbers. Thirty-three percent of the dropouts involved in this study are either employed full time, part time or self-employed; another 38% of the men and 26% of the women were unemployed. The ability to re-engage these participants in education is a daunting task. The 2012 High School Dropouts in America survey also states that many of the participants do not have an interest in returning to the same school and would like some flexible options to obtaining a high school diploma, perhaps alternative school options being able to meet the identified needs (Adams, 2012).

There have been various discussions and debates about the definition of dropout. Researchers, educators, and politicians have often defined this term in unique and individualistic ways. In 2002, the U.S. Census defined dropout as any person who is not enrolled in school or who is not a high school graduate or the equivalent (p. 58). Other educators and high schools have often referred to dropouts as “early school leavers who were discharged from a public school before graduation either with a labor certificate because they were over compulsory age or because they were not in school and could not be located due to institutionalization” (U.S. Census, 2002, p. 53).

In a 2002 study conducted by Algozzine and Algozzine, they established a more

definitive definition of dropout in their research study. A dropout is a student that has left the school or the district for one of the following reasons:

1. The student quit school after reaching the compulsory attendance age.
2. The student dropped out of school and the district system prior to reaching 16 or completing tenth grade.
3. A dropout is any person who has legally left school for reasons other than graduating, transferring to another school or comparable program, enrollment in the armed services, marriage, or illness.
4. A dropout is a pupil who leaves school before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another school.

The Center for Education Statistics conducted research entitled, “The High School and Beyond” and he was able to provide the following insight: (a) Dropouts were also more likely to be older than their peers, to be males rather than females, and enrolled in public school in urban areas in the South or West, (b) Dropouts tended to come from homes with a weaker educational support system. After completing a comparative analysis with dropouts and staying in school the data identified that dropouts: (a) had fewer study aids present in their homes, (b) had less opportunity for non-school related learning, (c) were less likely to have both natural parents living in the home, (d) had mothers with lower levels of formal education, (e) had mothers with lower educational expectations of their offspring, (f) had mothers who were more likely to be working, and (g) had parents who were less likely to be interested in monitoring both in school and out-of-school abilities (Retrieved from www.nces.ed.gov).

A Nation at-risk, published in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE), focused on the challenges that confront public education (Labyer, 2004).

The publication did a comparative analysis of academic achievement of American students with students in industrialized nations. The study reported and identified that student achievement in the United States was not adequate. Furthermore, approximately 23 million Americans were categorized as functionally illiterate with about 13% of 17 year olds classified as functionally illiterate (Labyer, 2004). The publication noted a major concern in math in science to the point of using the term “Disturbing inadequacies” (Labyer, 2004, p. 18). The research pinpointed that 35 states involved in the research where graduating students with one course in math and science. The study further goes on to state that student achievement was suffering due to a reduction in standards and expectations. This publication has brought to the forefront the need to focus on students identified as at-risk and the need to ensure that the educational needs of each student described are met (Labyer, 2004).

Students not performing academically have been a trend in education throughout the establishment of American education. Before the beginning of World War II, the mediocre academic student in America failed to graduate from high school. During this time in American history quite a few teenagers left high school and received employment in both unskilled and/or semi-skilled jobs. Students were able to receive these jobs without a high school diploma to the extent that there were some students that obtained highly skilled jobs (Labyer, 2004).

A study conducted by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported the following findings as it pertains to dropouts and completion rates in 2000 (Labyer, 2004):

1. Five out of every 100 young adults enrolled in high school in October 1999 left school before October 2000 without successfully completing a high school program. The percentage of young adults who left school each year without successfully completing a high school program decreased from 1972 through 1987. Despite year-

- to-year fluctuations, the percentage of students dropping out of school each year has stayed relatively unchanged since 1987.
2. In 2000, young adults living in families with incomes in the lowest 20% of all family incomes were six times as likely as their peers from families in the top 20% of the income distribution to drop out of high school.
 3. In 2000, about three-fourths (75.8%) of the current-year dropouts were ages 15 through 17.
 4. Over the last decade, between 347,000 and 544,000, 10th-12th grade students left school each year without successfully completing a high school program.
 5. In October 2000, some 3.8 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school. These youths accounted for 10.9% of the 34.6 million 16 through 24 year olds in the United States in 2000.
 6. The status dropout rate for Whites in 2000 remained lower than the rate for Blacks, but over the past three decades the difference between the rates for Whites and Blacks has narrowed. However, this narrowing of the gap occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Since 1990, the gap has remained fairly constant. In addition, Hispanic young adults in the United States continued to have a relatively high status dropout rate when compared to Asian/Pacific Islanders, Whites or Blacks.
 7. In 2000, the status dropout rate for Asian/Pacific Islander young adults was lower than for young adults from all other racial/ethnic groups. The status rate for Asian/Pacific Islanders was 3.8% compared with 27.8% for Hispanics, 13.1% for Blacks, and 6.9% for Whites.

Policymakers are examining the dropout rates in the United States. Realizing that if

addressed properly and effectively, it can benefit many students as well as their families. There is a direct correlation between the increase in alternative schools and the increase in at-risk students who seem detached from school and high school dropouts. Policymakers in North Carolina have addressed this by establishing a Committee on Dropout Prevention (§ 115C-64.6. Committee on Dropout Prevention). This was established to provide insight and leadership to local school administrative units, schools, agencies, and nonprofits. The committee consisted of approximately fifteen members whose primary objective is to reward dropout prevention grants to deserving schools, agencies, and nonprofits. The decision to reward dropout grants is based on the following criteria:

1. Grants shall be issued in varying amounts up to a maximum of one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000).
2. These grants shall be provided to innovative programs and initiatives that target students at-risk of dropping out of school and that demonstrate the potential to (i) be developed into effective, sustainable, and coordinated dropout prevention and reentry programs in middle schools and high schools and (ii) serve as effective models for other programs.
3. Grants shall be distributed geographically throughout the State and throughout the eight educational districts as defined in G.S. 115C-65. No more than three grants shall be awarded in any one county under this section in a single fiscal year.
4. Grants may be made to local school administrative units, schools, local agencies, or nonprofit organizations. Applications from nonprofits shall be subject to the additional fiscal accountability controls described in G.S. 115C-64.8.

5. Grants shall be to programs and initiatives that hold all students to high academic and personal standards.
6. Grant applications shall state (i) how grant funds will be used, (ii) what, if any, other resources will be used in conjunction with the grant funds, (iii) how the program or initiative will be coordinated to enhance the effectiveness of existing programs, initiatives, or services in the community, and (iv) a process for evaluating the success of the program or initiative.
7. Programs and initiatives that receive grants under this section shall be based on best practices for helping at-risk students achieve successful academic progress, preventing students from dropping out of school, or for increasing the high school completion rate for those students who already have dropped out of school.

School systems in North Carolina are required to report dropout data on all dropouts in grades one and higher to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) annually (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/dropoutmanual.pdf>).

Students whose whereabouts are unknown must be included in the total count of dropouts for the reporting year for each LEA. Each LEA is required to report dropouts by the grade level of their last membership in the reporting year. “For example, an eighth grader who fails to return to school in the fall as a ninth grader is reported at the eighth grade level, not the ninth grade. For this reason, all sending and receiving schools should share information on the status of school leavers during the first twenty-day period and for the remainder of the school year” (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/dropoutmanual.pdf>). North Carolina has a very specific definition for dropouts and a method for calculation as seen in Appendix B and C.

Each school should maintain a School Leaver Roster (SLR). A copy of the official roster should be located in the school and in the central office. Figure 24 details that dropout rates by race/ethnicity and gender in North Carolina High Schools for 2012-13 as reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April 2014 (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>).

Figure 24 details that dropout totals by race/ethnicity and gender in the Southeastern District in North Carolina for 2012-13 as reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in April 2014; this district had one of the ten highest dropout rates in the state for 2012-13 (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>).

Figure 3 details dropout count for the county in rural Southeast North Carolina remained constant until the 2007-2008 school year and it has fluctuated since that year. Figure 4 details the ten year dropout rate of the county in rural North Carolina remained constant until the 2007-2008 school year and has increased substantially since that year. Based on the data, it is obvious that something needs to change in order to meet the needs of all students and prevent them from dropping out of school. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reported in April of 2014 that the district in Southeastern North Carolina has one of the top ten highest dropout rates out of the 115 school districts in the state (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>). Assessing and strengthening the strategies used in the alternative learning model may certainly help change this data for the positive in the future.

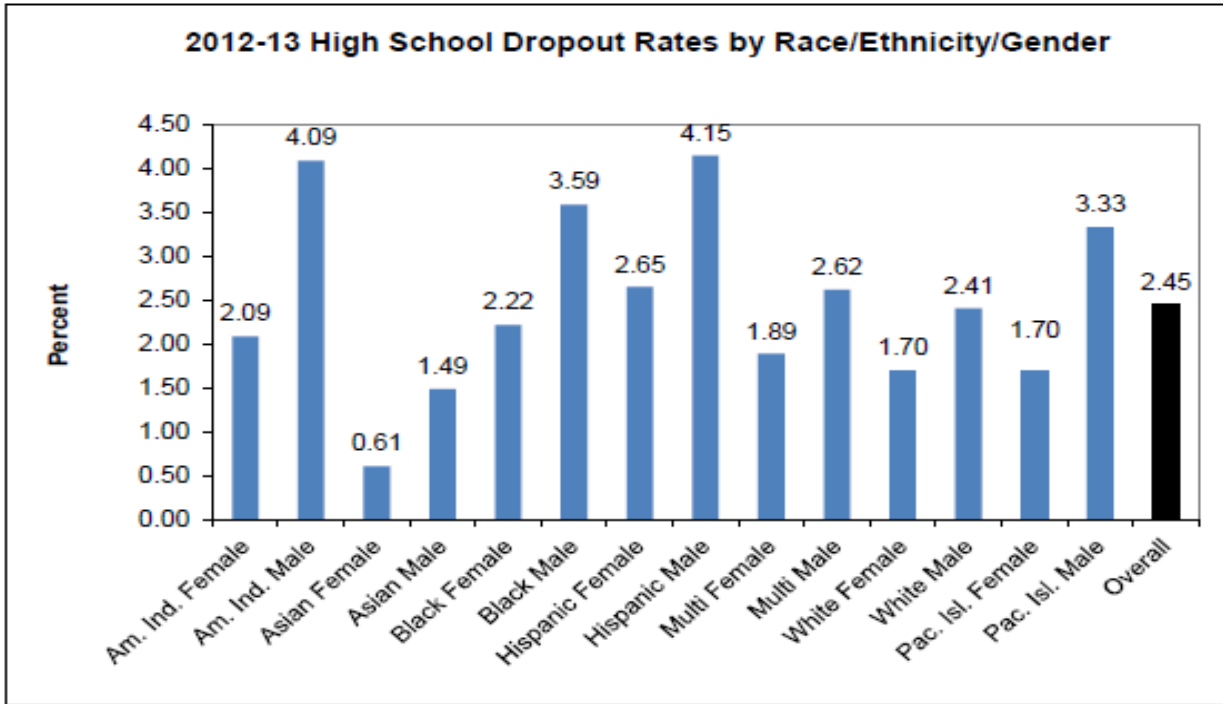


Figure 24. North Carolina high school dropout rates by race/ethnicity/gender for 2012-13.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reports the following key terms as it relates to dropouts (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/dropoutmanual.pdf>):

1. Dropout Referral Law: A state law that requires school systems to refer dropouts to appropriate education alternatives including community colleges. (Refer to G.S. 115C-47)
2. Initial Enrollee: A special status for students who enroll in a school system for the first time and remain in membership for twenty days or less. Students with this status are not included in the dropout count.
3. No Show: Term used to designate a student who is expected to return in the fall, but on day 20 of the new school year is not in membership at the assigned school or in any other approved program. (Students whose whereabouts cannot be determined must be reported as dropouts.)
4. Receiving School: Any school in the LEA to which a student is normally promoted or assigned during or at the end of a school year.
5. Reporting Exemption: Any reason, as stated in the Uniform Dropout Definition, which excludes a student from being reported as a dropout.
6. Reporting Year: A twelve-month period in which data are collected on dropouts. In North Carolina the reporting year begins on the first day of the school year and runs through the last day of summer vacation.
7. Sending School: The school from which students are transferred or promoted during or at the end of the school year.

Due to the fact that there is currently a focus on dropout rates and how to decrease them, many

strategies obviously revolve around how to provide better support to students. Students of low socio-economic status pose a unique challenge to schools today.

Poverty

There are many urban educators that face an uphill battle in educating children in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). Students in poverty face emotional and physical challenges, health care, poor nutrition, dysfunctional family units and inner city neighborhoods (Dubow & Luster, 1990). These challenges hamper and prevent students from receiving a quality education.

Furthermore, students in poverty are often times placed in adult roles in terms of duties and responsibilities which impact their academic performance. Some of the roles that students in poverty take on are financial, social and/or emotional. These students are caught in a cycle of either generational or situational poverty that does not provide an opportunity to escape their situations or challenges. Once a student has identified that there is no way out of this situation they become hopeless and helpless, which takes away the importance of obtaining a quality education. Also, a major issue that students in poverty face is lack of resources. These issues continue to hamper students in the educational arena more than lack of motivation and attentiveness. Many educators place the blame of low student performance on the student, when it is simply that the student's basic needs are not being met. The fact that these needs are not being met leads to inattentiveness, lack of motivation, discipline and lack of focus. Students placed in this situation are then labeled as slow learners and placed in classes that are low level. Schools with lower socio-economic students have higher suspension rates (Iselin, 2010).

As of 2013 according to Childtrends.org, 67% of Black children lived in single homes, 52% of Native American children, and 25% of White children (Retrieved from

<http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=parental-involvement-in-schools>). Coming from single family homes contributes to the likeliness of being in poverty. Research by Jensen (2009) indicates that students coming from poverty are more likely to move from place to place, experience developmental delays, higher incidence of medical issues, and fall behind in school.

In the city in Southeast North Carolina, the poverty rate is 35.9% compared to 17.5% for the state of North Carolina. The average median income in the identified region is \$26,235 and is \$46,334 for the state of North Carolina (Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3737220.html>). Poverty threshold for a family of four is \$23,834 (Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-245.pdf>).

Based upon research by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), poor children are more often identified with behavioral and emotional issues compared to their counterparts. Children from low socioeconomic households demonstrated higher incidents of problems with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Iselin, 2010, p. 62). Externalized behavior transpired into acts of aggression and violence. Internalized behavior in poor children often results in depression, anxiety, and social issues (Iselin, 2010, p. 62). Based upon research by The Committee on School Health (2003), the school population that are habitually suspended from school are the least likely to have adult supervision while they serve the suspension.

Conclusion

Research on academic structures that successfully serve non-traditional students demonstrates that there are many factors that affect the results of these programs. Since a significant portion of the student population that end up participating in these programs are at-risk students, external factors that influence their behaviors need to be addressed by school staff. External influences include factors such as community dynamics and poverty. Current research

also indicates that the school leadership, culture, use of suspensions, and classroom management greatly influence the school environment and ultimately the educational success of students.

Also supported by research is that systemic change can occur if certain modifications do occur, with the ultimate goal being increased numbers of students graduating from high school and becoming productive members of communities and society. Many programs and school districts are experimenting with novice programs. This topic would greatly benefit from further research, such as a longitudinal study on the effectiveness of specific discipline models utilized in many of these new programs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina. The research design that will be utilized for this study is program evaluation. This model was used due to the fact that as identified by Lee and Sampson (1990), there are two main purposes for this study. The first objective is for accountability and the second objective is to identify areas for improvement. During this program evaluation information regarding whether the goals that the program is intended for are being achieved. Lee and Sampson (1990) also point out that no matter how well a program is implemented, there is always room for improvement. Using a research design method assists a researcher in assessing what is working and what needs to be changed to stimulate improvement.

The validity of this program evaluation is the degree to which evidence and theory support the explanation of test scores (North Carolina Department of Instruction Technical Manual, 2008). The validity yields a confirmation on how well a test achieves its function. Regarding End of Grade tests, evidence of validity is provided through content relevance and relationship of test scores to other external variables. The written items on the EOG are reviewed by at least two content area teachers. Furthermore, additional data, to include dropout, graduation, and discipline data are provided by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which is reviewed by departmental lead to ensure the validity of the information provided. Lastly, the questions on the survey are aligned with the above-mentioned data to ensure validity.

There is limited research on alternative schools. Researchers have primarily focused on the characteristics of alternative schools and the programs provided to at-risk students. Most of

the existing studies have used quasi-experimental designs. According to Lagana et al. (2011), few researchers have focused on the perceptions of students enrolled in alternative school through the use of qualitative research methodology. Furthermore, there is limited research on the effects of alternative schools on student success as it relates to student performance.

This chapter provides a description of the school being studied, the state of the alternative school, the North Carolina accountability data, the research design, the population, the procedures, and the instrumentation.

Description of the School

First, as with many alternative schools, there is a negative connotation associated with the alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina, the alternative school that serves the county's middle and high school students. The community's opinion of this school is that it is where students are sent to drop-out; this opinion seemingly holds true to a certain extent when assessing the graduation rate comparisons of the alternative school with the only high school in the county. Furthermore, the fact that it is a separate alternative school, adds to the stereotype that exists.

One could reason that transforming the alternative school into an alternative learning program, essentially a school within a school of the only high school, could have substantially positive effects on the culture and climate of the school and the greater community. Secondly, the student discipline data in the county, especially pertaining to minority students, has a direct impact on placement of students at the alternative school, the dropout rate, and the graduation rate. There has been a major population shift in the county during the past ten years, subsequently causing a substantial increase in the minority population; however, there has not been a change in the philosophy of the school system in terms of professional development on how to facilitate instruction for diverse populations or use of effective discipline models.

Finally, these data are clear for many districts across the state--they are increasing

graduation rates and reducing dropout rates through the use of virtual learning, which directly correlates with seat time. They are also achieving this through reduced credit diplomas and this has a direct correlation to seat time. Therefore, an extensive virtual plan, a reduced elective plan, and appropriate counseling practices for students must be constructed and implemented in order for the data to improve.

The county in Southeastern North Carolina has used the guidelines established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and have established specific board policies as it relates to alternative education (Policy Code: 3470/4305 Alternative Learning Programs/Schools, 2013). The purpose of the board is to provide a safe and orderly environment at each school using a Behavioral Management Plan, Parental Involvement Plan, and Conflict Resolution Plan.

The alternative learning school has been implemented as an additional option for students that continue to have challenges with behavior management and/or academics in the regular education setting. The following have been identified by the school district as purposes of an alternative education setting:

1. To intervene and address problems that prevent a student from achieving success in the regular educational setting,
2. To reduce the risk that a student will drop out of school by providing resources to help the student resolve issues affecting his or her performance at school,
3. To return a student, if and when it is practicable, to the regular educational setting with the skills necessary to succeed in that environment, and
4. To preserve a safe and orderly learning environment in the regular educational setting.

5. Students are typically referred to schools based on their attendance area. Based on law, the board may decide to assign a student to a school outside of their district in an effort for a student to attend a theme/specialized school or for any other reason that the board deems necessary.

Students attending an alternative school may be referred to school via voluntary or involuntary basis. The following in the transfer process for students:

1. Responsibilities of Personnel at Referring School: In addition to any other procedures required by this policy, prior to referring a student to an alternative learning program or school, the principal of the referring school must:
 - a. document the procedures that were used to identify the student being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly,
 - b. provide the reasons for referring the student to an alternative learning program or school, and
 - c. provide to the alternative learning program or school all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.
2. Responsibilities of School Personnel at the Alternative learning Program or School. If a student who is subject to G.S. 14-208.18 is assigned to an alternative school, the student must be supervised by school personnel at all times.
3. Voluntary Referral: this type of referral is encouraged whenever possible and parent/guardian should be a part of this process. Once the transfer is approved the sending and receiving principal must arrange the transfer process. The sending principal must notify superintendent or designee of this transfer.
4. Involuntary Referral

- a. the student presents a clear threat to the safety of other students or personnel,
- b. the student presents a significant disruption to the educational environment in the regular educational setting,
- c. the student is at-risk of dropping out or not meeting standards for promotion, and resources in addition to or different from those available in the regular educational setting are needed to address the issue,
- d. the student has been charged with a felony or a crime that allegedly endangered the safety of others, and it is reasonably foreseeable that the educational environment in the regular educational setting will be significantly disrupted if the student remains, or
- e. if the Code of Student Conduct provides for a transfer as a consequence of the student's behavior.

Before an involuntary transfer is extended, the referring school must document all academic, social and/or behavioral problems a student is having within the school. Once those areas have been identified, then action steps or consequences must be enforced to correct behavior and/or academic performance within the regular education setting. Once the principal identifies that the steps and/or actions that have been put in place does not correct academic/behavior needs of the student, then the principal must recommend to the superintendent that the student be transferred to the alternative school. The principal must provide the following to support request for alternative placement: (1) an explanation of the student's behavior or academic performance that is at issue; (2) documentation or a summary of the documentation of the efforts to assist the student in the student's regular educational setting,

if applicable; and (3) documentation of the circumstances that support an involuntary transfer (Policy Code: 3470/4305 Alternative Learning Programs/Schools, 2013).

Research Questions

1. What are the **demographic factors** of the students, parents/guardians, and faculty that influence discipline issues?
2. What are the **varying perspectives** regarding the reputation of the alternative school?
3. How is the **implementation of the discipline model** viewed by students, parents/guardians, and faculty?
4. How is the **faculty prepared** to meet the specific needs of the at-risk students at this alternative school?

Overview of Study

The basis of this three-step approach to this study was to examine the impact of a high school (9-12) alternative educational setting on student performance.

Step one consisted of collecting data (achievement, discipline, graduation rate, dropout rate and suspension) that pertains to the state of the alternative learning school in the rural part of Southeastern North Carolina. Step two addressed the research questions established in this study. Finally, step three addressed the perception of the alternative school and how it impacted student performance as indicated in Figure 25.

The research design method that was used for this program evaluation was descriptive statistics. No variables will be manipulated. No treatment will be applied to the subject. Any differences in the variables had already occurred prior to research being conducted.

Population and Sample

The data will be collected from students of an alternative school in rural Southeastern

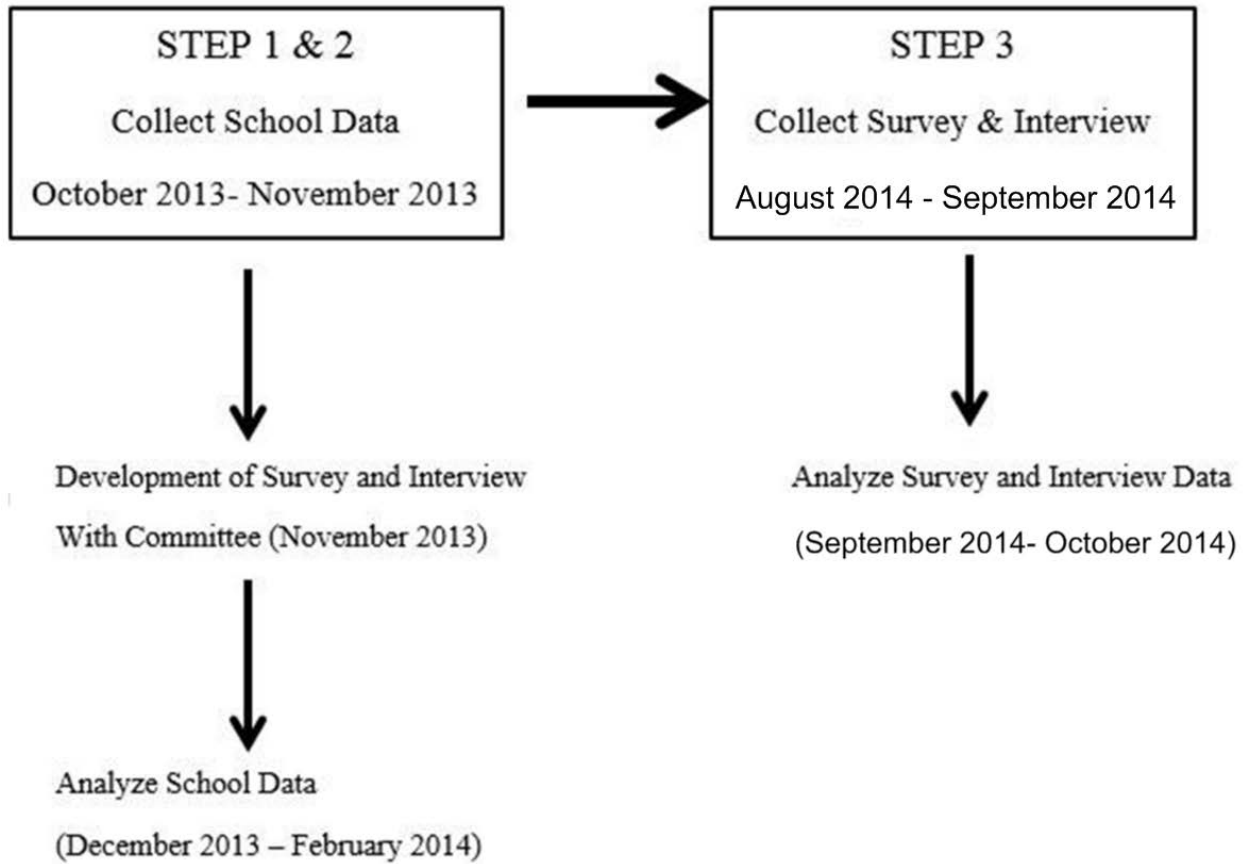


Figure 25. Data collection and analysis.

North Carolina during the 2013-2014 school-year. The participants of this study will include sixty-seven students assigned to alternative placement in the district's alternative program. The alternative school in this district has the following grade level breakdown: ninth grade- ten students, tenth grade-twelve students, eleventh grade- twenty students and twelfth grade- twenty-five students who were enrolled during the 2013-2014 school year. The students that are eligible to attend the alternative school fall into the following categories: school of choice, alternative placement because of discipline, and students that are suspended for more than five days. This arrangement of students has caused the administration and district to explore and research methods for restructuring this environment. The age of the students range from 12-21. The alternative school serves middle and high school students in the same setting.

The alternative campus is located in the rural Southeastern North Carolina and is approximately fifteen miles from the district office. The staff consists of the following: principal, assistant principal, twelve teachers, school resource officer, guidance counselor, social worker, computer assistant, and an administrative assistant. The number of students at the alternative campus varies throughout the year due to circumstances and/or situations that may arise within the district. The students at the alternative school are taught in a traditional setting that presently is ineffective. The school dropout rate is high and the graduation rate is low and no improvement is likely to occur unless changes are made to the current structure.

Adult and student surveys will be used to identify the effectiveness of the alternative school and provide support in answering the four research questions, by providing information on the perceptions of the alternative program from the perspective of students, parents, administrators and identified community members. These perceptions will not only be identified

through the use of Likert Survey responses, but also by Survey questions where respondents can provide comments.

Instrumentation

This research will be conducted using surveys (parent, student, faculty, and staff). Prior to providing surveys to the participants, the surveys will be reviewed by three administrators for clarity and understanding of questions. After receiving the feedback from the administrators, the survey questions on the parent, student, and faculty and staff surveys will be adjusted accordingly for better understanding. The parent survey subsists of eighty-three questions that includes agree to strongly agree (Likert scale), selecting items that apply to individual, and completing a statement. The student survey subsists of one hundred and one questions that includes agree to strongly disagree (Likert scale), selecting item that applies to individual and completing a statement. Students that were under the age of 18, and had a desire to participate, will receive parental permission prior to completing the survey. The faculty survey subsists of ninety-nine questions consisting of agree to strongly disagree (Likert scale), selecting item that applies to individual and completing a statement. Parents, students, and faculty/staff members will complete their surveys on their personal computer, as well as school computers through Google. Participants will be provided a paper copy of the survey if they do not have access to a computer. Surveys will be completed by faculty/staff, students, and parents during fall semester of 2014.

Procedures

Permission was obtained from the Assistant Superintendent of the school district for the surveys to be administered to the students, parents, faculty, staff and administrators at the alternative school. The Principal and Assistant Principal were contacted to discuss the purpose

of the survey. Each person will be given surveys for a group of students and a cover letter explaining the procedures for completing the survey. In order to maintain that an individual would be identified by name in any subsequent reports, strict anonymity will be expressed. The survey instruments will be collected during follow-up visits to the school or if they are mailed to the office. To ensure collection of all surveys, the researchers will make follow-up calls and send various emails. A general coding system will be conducted and the information from each survey instrument will be transformed into a code and entered into the computer using Google Drive. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies tables, matrices, and graphs will be constructed using Google Drive (with T-tests, if results are significant) and composite variables will be performed on the survey results.

Analysis of Study

The analysis of the study will be based on the following research questions:

1. What are the **demographic factors** of the students, parents/guardians, and faculty that influence discipline issues?
2. What are the **varying perspectives** regarding the reputation of the alternative school?
3. How is the **implementation of the discipline model** viewed by students, parents/guardians, and faculty?
4. How is the **faculty prepared** to meet the specific needs of the at-risk students at this alternative school?

In order to answer the identified research questions above, the researchers will use quantitative and qualitative approach. The surveys created for parents, faculty, and staff will fulfill the quantitative aspect of this study. Descriptive statistics will be utilized to summarize the data from the surveys.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify an appropriate structure to successfully serve all alternative students in an effort to increase the graduation rate and academic proficiency of the students at an alternative high school in rural Southeastern North Carolina. The two areas of focus are suspensions and discipline to assist the researcher to answer the following question:

To what extent, if any, did suspensions and discipline impact student performance?

The following topics and subtopics will also be addressed in this chapter to support the research question: student suspension and discipline data, demographic data, supporting research, conclusions, recommendations, and summary.

While conducting this research it became evident that in order to examine both suspensions and discipline, that there were many other contributive factors to this topic that affected student academic success to include environmental and familial influences. These factors will also be presented in this chapter.

According to Iselin (2010), the same students are suspended repetitively, often resulting in these students academically struggling and dropping out of school. The same repeat offenders are sometimes sent to alternative schools resulting from these repeated suspensions. No parallel has ever been identified that out of school suspension correlates to changed behaviors in students, but the practice continues regularly. This is a strong contributing factor to the lack of these students' academic success. Many districts are presently exploring alternatives to out of school suspensions in order to keep students in school so they will not miss academic instruction and result in increased student success.

Most suspensions are implemented for non-violent reasons that could be punished with alternate choices resulting perhaps in a change in behaviors long term. According to

Marchbanks et al. (2013), “If the state were able to reduce the effects of discipline on likelihood of dropping out by 13, the level associated with school discipline, the total savings would be between \$711 million and \$1.3 billion” (p. 19). Ultimately, the goal is to increase student performance and high school graduation rates. In order for this to occur, students must receive a means to an equitable education leading to graduation by providing effective discipline structures.

The purpose of this research was to investigate students who were suspended and sent to an alternative school and how they fared academically based upon the discipline structure at the alternative setting. Input from faculty, administration, parents, and community members were included to gather a comprehensive view of the impact of alternative schools on the students that were sent to the alternative school being studied and others’ perceptions of this particular school.

Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were used to gain insight into the impact of suspensions and discipline on non-traditional students’ academic success in an alternative school. The intent of the research was to analyze how suspensions and the discipline model affected academic performance and graduation rates. Qualitative research encompassed descriptive surveys that were utilized to conduct this study. Quantitative research included descriptive statistics and compilation of the data collected from the survey results. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the study.

Student Performance Definitions

Academic progress encompasses several factors that are defined as terms. The following terms, unless otherwise noted, are taken in part or in their entirety from *Dropout Prevention: Strategies for improving high school graduation rates* (Center for Child and Family Policy Duke University http://www.familyimpactseminars.org/s_ncfis04report.pdf, 2013)

- (1) At-risk: In the context of dropping out of school, being “at-risk” means a student has one or more factors that have been found to predict a high rate of school failure at some time in the future. This “failure” generally refers to dropping out of high school before graduating, but also can mean being retained within a grade from one year to the next. The risk factors include extreme poverty, having a parent who never finished high school, living in foster care and living in a household where the primary language spoken is not English.
- (2) Cohort graduation rate (as currently defined in North Carolina): The percentage of ninth-graders who graduate from high school four years later. This rate does not account for students graduating in more than four years or those who drop out of school prior to grade nine. The federal rate (also referred to as the average? freshman graduation rate) focuses on public high school students, as opposed to all high school students or the general population, and is designed to provide an estimate of on-time graduation from high school. Thus, it provides a measure of the extent to which public high schools are graduating students within the expected period of four years.
- (3) Dropout (noun): An individual who is not in school and who is not a graduate. A person who drops out of school may later return and graduate, but is called a “dropout” at the time he/she left school. At the time the person returns to school, he/she is called a “stopout.” Measures to describe these often complicated behaviors include the event dropout rate (or the closely related school persistence rate), the status dropout rate and the high school completion rate.
- (4) Non-traditional student: A public school student with any of the following characteristics: is old for grade, attends school part time, works full time while enrolled, has dependents or is a single parent.
- (5) Recidivism: the tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior and/or the returning rate of student to the alternative program (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
- (6) Retention: Repeating an academic year of school. Students are retained in grade if they are judged not to have the academic or social skills to advance to the next grade. Retention is known as “grade retention,” “being held back” or “repeating a grade.”
- (7) Student perception: How the student feels about their home school and/or alternative school based on survey (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
- (8) Transition: Movement from alternative school back to home school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Nationally, focuses on increasing graduation rates and providing support to “at-risk” students have been the topics of debate for decades. While examining factors that affect student performance resulting in increased graduation rates, the issues of suspension and discipline are common related theme. Based on research by Arcia (2007), repeated discipline referrals or suspensions is one of the critical factors that contribute to the students being more likely to drop

out of school or sent to an alternative setting. The impact of the discipline referrals and suspensions often results in a continuous cycle with negative long term consequences.

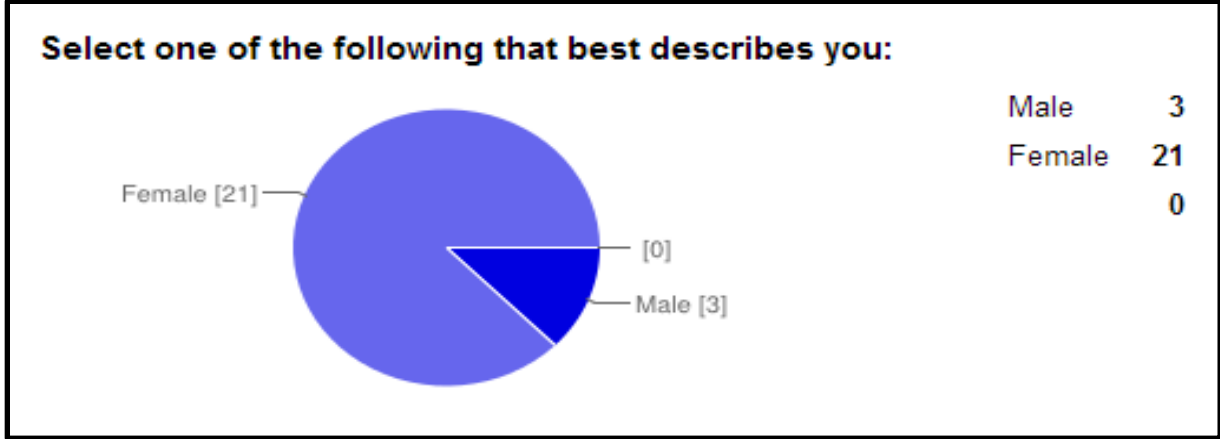
Data Overview

This research was conducted using surveys (parent/guardian, student, and faculty). Prior to providing surveys to the participants, the surveys were reviewed by an expert panel for construct validity. After receiving the feedback from the review panel, the survey questions for the parent/guardian, student, and faculty surveys were adjusted accordingly.

Demographics

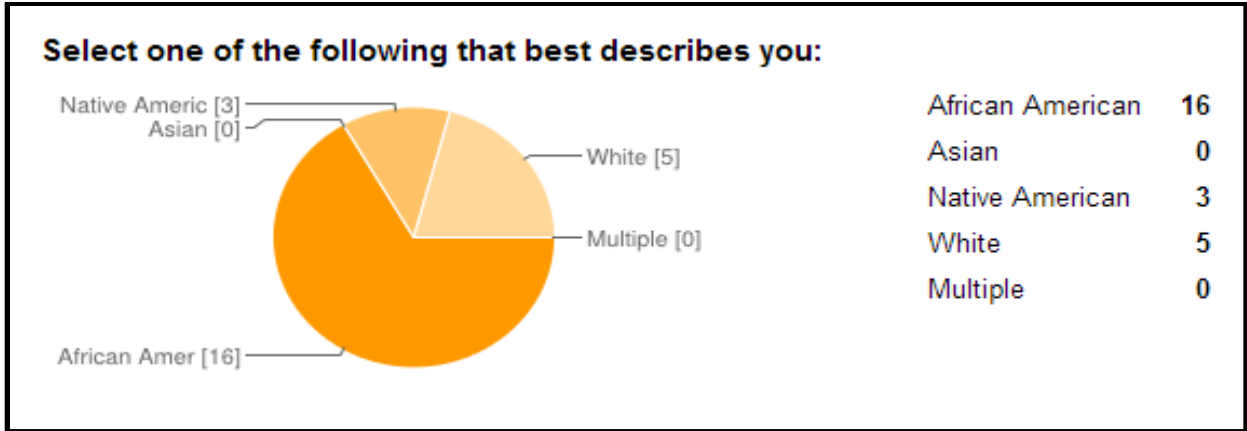
The parent/guardian survey consisted of 83 Likert scale questions with 5 response choices (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly disagree), list type questions that allowed respondents to select items that applied to them, and open-ended completion statements. Some of the questions included continuous scale type questions (negative impact to positive impact). Out of the total surveys sent to guardians/parents, 69% (24 out of 35) parent/guardians responded to the survey, 12.5% (3 out of 24) of parent/guardian respondents were male and 87.5% (21 out of 24) were female (see Figure 26). The majority of parent/guardian respondents were African American at 67% (16 out of 24), 21% (5 out of 24) of parent/guardian respondents were White, and 12% (3 out of 24) were Native American (see Figure 27).

The student survey consisted of 101 Likert scale questions with 5 response choices (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly disagree), list type questions that allowed respondents to select items that applied to them and open-ended statement completions. Students under the age of 18, and having a desire to participate, received written parental permission prior to completing the survey. The investigator provided the parent a consent form



Note. According to genders, 12.5% of parent/guardian respondents were male and 87.5% were female.

Figure 26. Gender of parent or guardian.



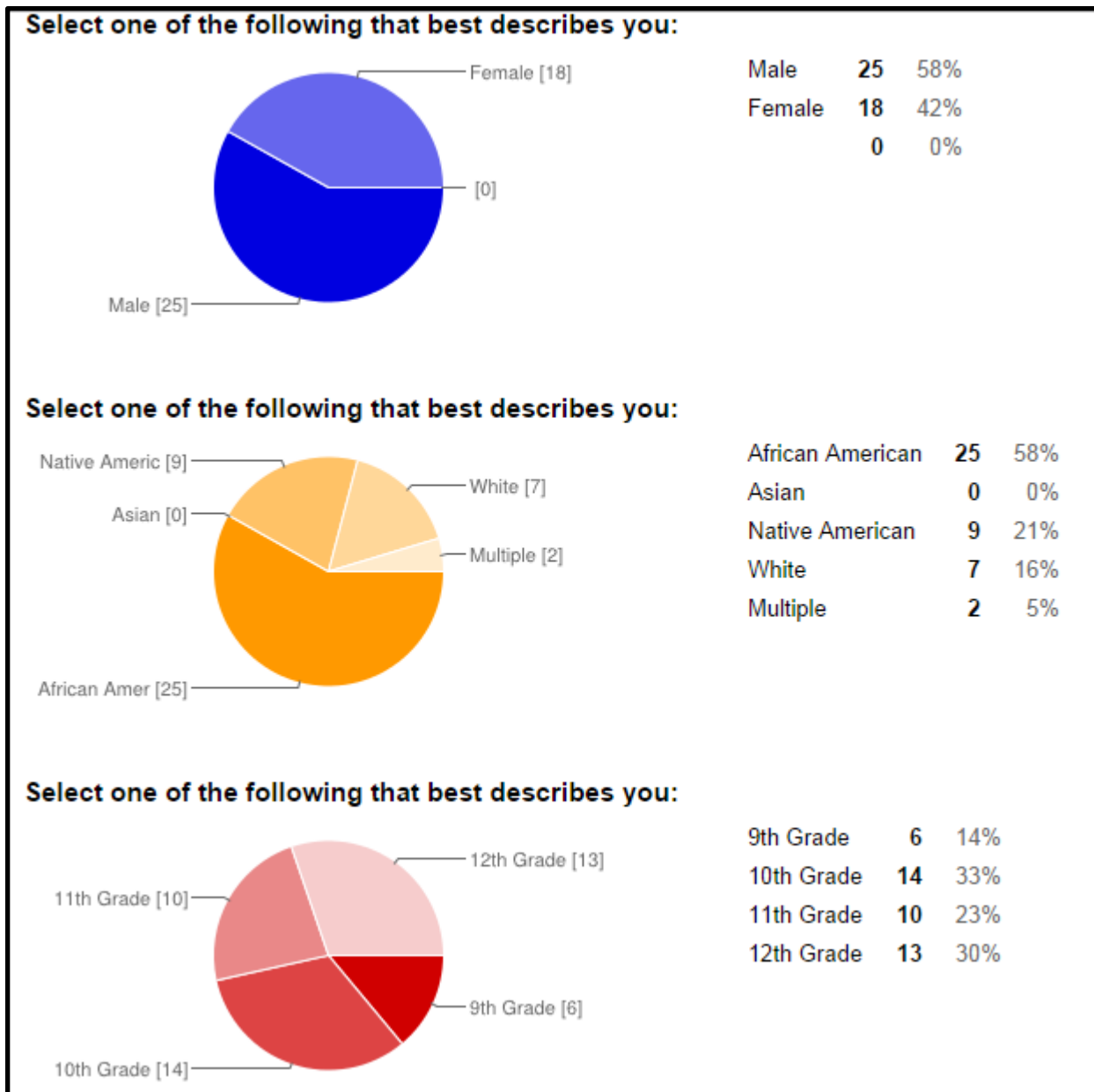
Note. Responses were as follows: 67% of parent/guardian were African American, 21% were White, and 12% were Native American.

Figure 27. Ethnicity of parent or guardian.

that was signed and returned prior to the minor subjects' completion of the survey. In total, 64% of students responded to the survey (43 out of 67) (see Figure 28). Regarding the sex, 42% (18 out of 43) of student respondents were female and 58% (25 out of 43) were male. When asked race, 58% (25 out of 43) of student respondents were African American, 21% (9 out of 43) were Native American, and 16% (7 out of 43) were Caucasian. The grade range at the school was from 9th to 12th grade with the highest percentage of student respondents in grades 10 and 12 followed by grades 11 and 9. Lastly, the majority of student respondents were in the range of 15-18 years old. As far as grades levels, 33% (14 out of 43) of student respondents were in the 10th grade, 30% (13 out of 43) were in the 12th grade, 23% (10 out of 43) were in the 11th grade, and 14% (6 out of 43) were in the 9th grade (see Figure 28).

The survey results from the Academy indicate that majority of the student population are Black and Native American males which is aligned with the national data research on the population that is most frequently suspended or sent to alternative schools.

Based on Census Data (2015), the local populace is comprised of approximately 43% White, 46.8% Black, 6.1% American Indian, 2% two or more races, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3737220.html>). According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2012), in 2012-2013 and historically, Black and American Indian males, and special education students were suspended at a higher rate than other demographics in North Carolina (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>, p. 23). Iselin (2010), Hinojosa (2008), and Mendez and Knoff (2003) all noted that this disproportionality exist nationwide when researching suspensions and discipline in public schools.



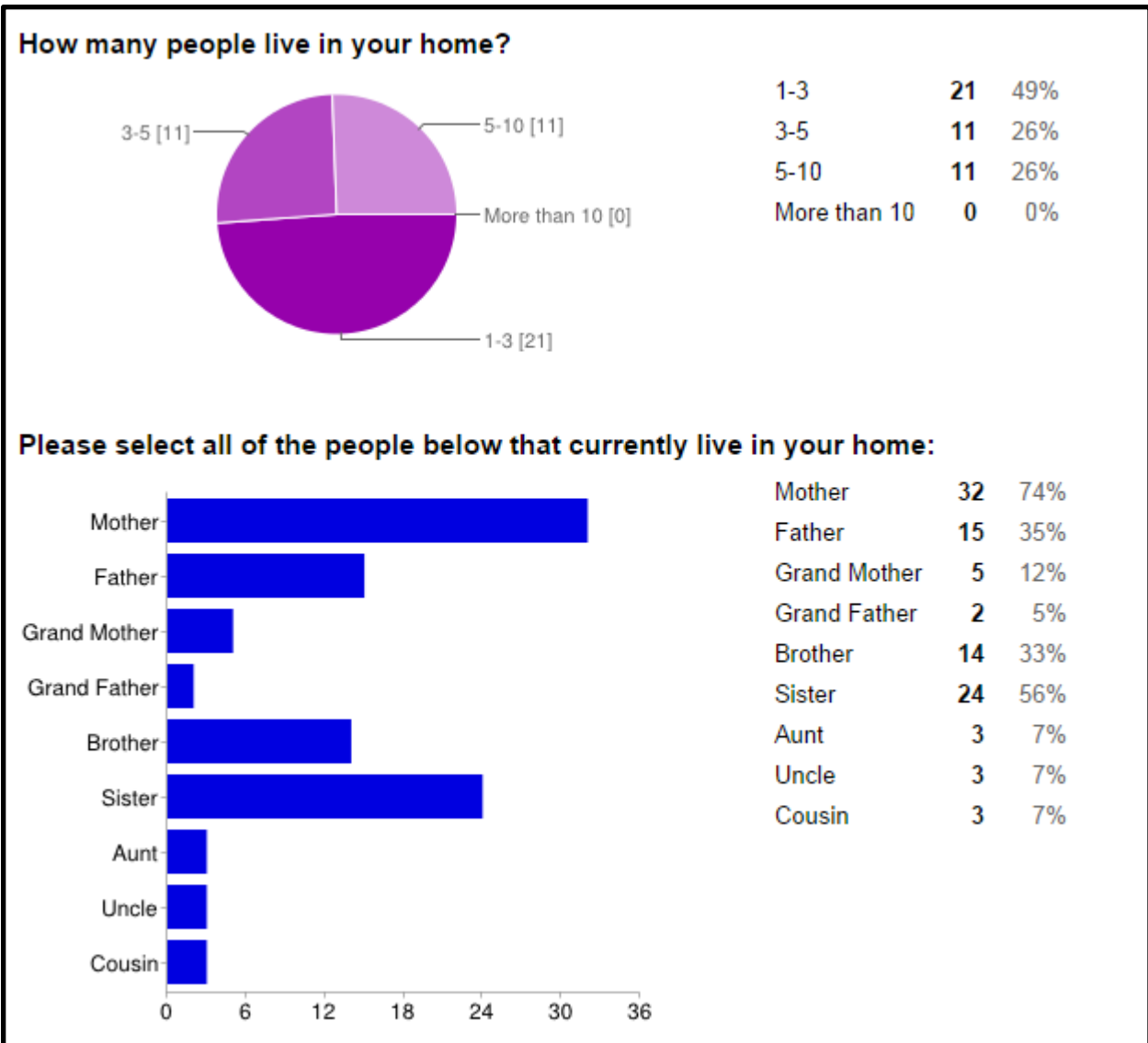
Note. When asked about the demographics, 58% of student respondents indicate that they are male and 42% indicate that they are female -- 58% of student respondents indicate that they are African American, 21% indicate that they are Native American, 16% indicate that they are White, and 5% indicate that they are multi-racial -- 33% of student respondents are in the tenth grade, 30% are in the twelfth grade, 23% are in the eleventh grade, and 14% are in the ninth grade.

Figure 28. Student demographics.

The Academy's student population is comprised of mostly Black (58%) and Native American (21%). Only 16% of the students were White. Statistically the percentages of Black and Native American students at the Academy are not representative of the percentages of these two demographics that comprise this community. Indicative of the fact that minorities are suspended and placed in alternative settings at a higher percentage than their White counterparts, this is also holds true at the Academy.

A high percentage of mothers were reported as living in the home at 74% and fathers were significantly lower at 35%. When asked how many people live in their home, 49% (21 out of 43) of student respondents stated that one to three people lived in their homes, 26% (11 out of 43) answered three to five people, 26% (11 out of 43) five to ten, and 0% (0 out of 43) replied that there were more than ten (see Figure 29). In the city in Southeast North Carolina, the poverty rate is 35.9% compared to 17.5% for the state of North Carolina. The average median income in the identified region is \$26,235 and is \$46,334 for the state of North Carolina (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3737220.html>). Poverty threshold for a family of four is \$23,834 (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-245.pdf>).

Schools with lower socio-economic students have higher suspension rates (Iselin, 2010). Based upon research by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), poor children are more often identified with behavioral and emotional issues compared to their counterparts. Children from low socioeconomic households demonstrated higher incidents of problems with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Iselin, 2010, p. 62). The Academy is located in a district that has statistically high poverty and a demonstrated lack of resources and opportunities; based on the research, poverty can also be a contributing factor to the makeup of the student population at the Academy.



Note. Responses by students regarding how many people are living in the home: 49% responded one to three persons, 26% responded three to five persons, 26% responded five to ten persons, and 0% responded more than ten. Responses by students to who lives in the home: 74% stated mother, 35% stated father; 12% stated grandmother, 5% stated grandfather, 33% stated brother, 56% stated sister, 7% stated aunt, 7% said uncle, and 7% cousin.

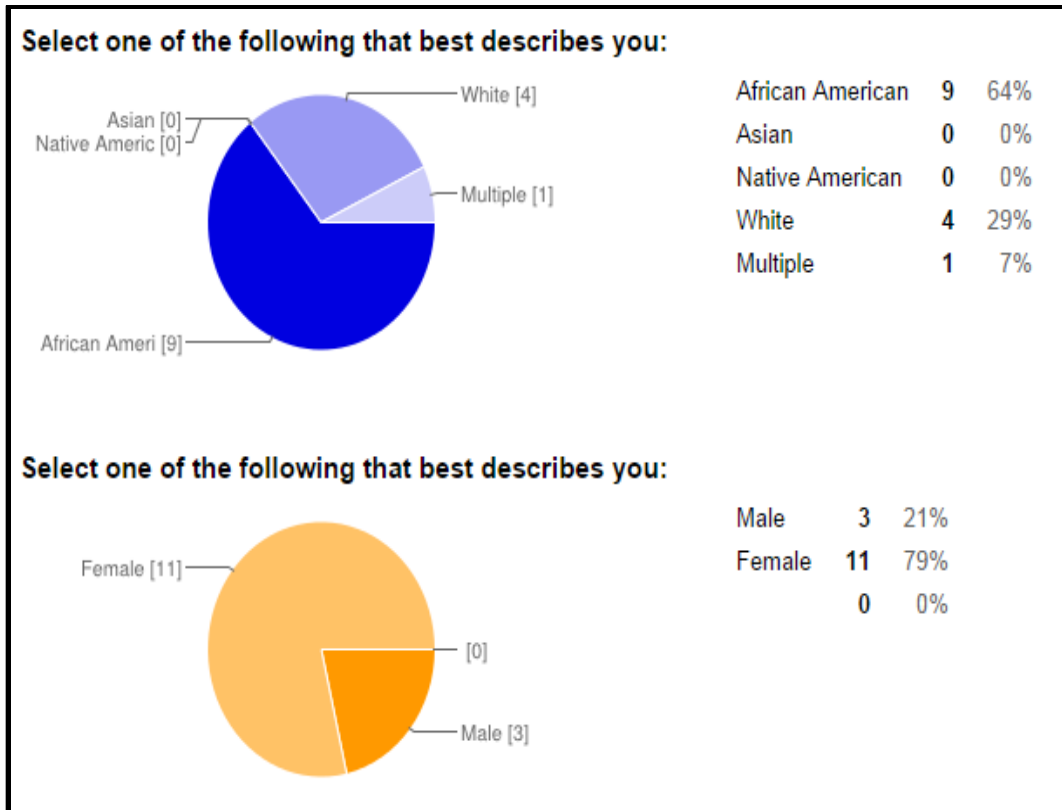
Figure 29. Family demographics.

The data also indicates the majority of the homes are single parent homes mostly maternal. Based on the research by Henderson and Berla (1994), students do better in school if the father and the mother are involved, even if the father does not live with the student.

As of 2013 according to Childtrends.org, 67% of Black children lived in single homes, 52% of Native American children, and 25% of White children (Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=parental-involvement-in-schools>). Analyzing the data indicates that the Academy has mainly Black students from single family homes. Both of these factors, being a minority and coming from a single family home, increases the odds of struggles with behavior and academic achievement. Research by Jensen (2009) indicates that students coming from poverty are more likely to move from place to place, experience developmental delays, higher incidence of medical issues, and fall behind in school. At the Academy, the majority of the students are minorities, from single parent homes, and living in poverty so they have multiple factors that increase their odds of struggling with discipline issues and academic success.

The faculty survey consisted of 99 Likert scale questions with 5 response choices (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly disagree), list type questions that allowed respondents to select items that applied to them, and open-ended completion statements. Faculty members completed their surveys on their personal computers, as well as school computers through Google.

From the faculty member, 67% (14 out of 21) responded to the survey. As to the demographics of the faculty, 64% (9 out of 14) of faculty respondents are African American, 29% (4 out of 14) were White, and 7% (1 out of 14) were multiple races; with 79% (11 out of 14) being female and 21% (3 out of 14) being male (see Figure 30).



Note. According to responses regarding their demographics, 64% of faculty respondents are African American, 29% are White, and 7% are multiple races; 79% are female and 21% are male.

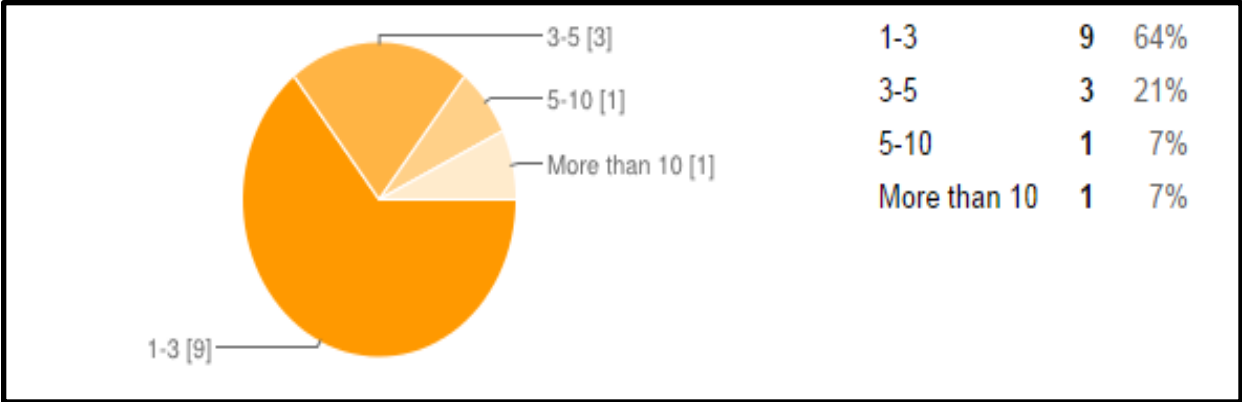
Figure 30. Faculty demographics.

Faculty was asked how many years they have taught at the academy, 64% (9 out of 14) of faculty respondents have taught at the academy between one and three year, 21% (3 out of 14) three to five years, 7% (1 out of 14) five to ten years, and 7% (1 out of 14) more than ten years (see Figure 31).

The race of the faculty is mostly comprised of African Americans who are predominately female. Even though the school has a significant number of Native American students, there are no Native American teachers. Teaching is a female dominated profession with 77% of teachers nationwide being female based on research by The National Center for Education Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>). The national statistics regarding this are in line with the Academy which has mostly female teachers. The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) reports that throughout the country, White teachers comprise 83.5% of the teaching profession, Blacks make up 6.7%, and Native Americans a mere 0.5% (Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009324/tables/sass0708_2009324_t12n_02.asp).

Considering the population of the Southeast region where the school is located it is unusual to have the majority of the teachers who are Black at the Academy since the populace of the area has less than a 4% difference between Blacks and Whites. But, the composition of having a mostly Black teacher staff is reflective of the student population.

Nationally the teacher turnover rate is 13% (Alliance for Excellent Teaching, 2014, p. 2). For the state of North Carolina the teacher turnover rate it is 19%; in the school district where the Academy is located it is 40%; at the Academy it is 40% (Retrieved from <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?Page=2&pSchCode=316&pLEACode=830&pYear=2012-2013>). Based on a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), “This high



Note. Responses to how long they have taught at the Academy, 64% of faculty respondents have taught at the Academy between one and three year, 21% three to five years, 7% five to ten years, and 7% more than ten years.

Figure 31. Faculty length of time at the Academy.

turnover rate disproportionately affects high-poverty schools and seriously compromises the nation's capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching.”

The majority of the staff, at 64%, has only one to three years of teaching experience. Out of the total faculty, 85% of the staff has five or less years of experience in teaching.

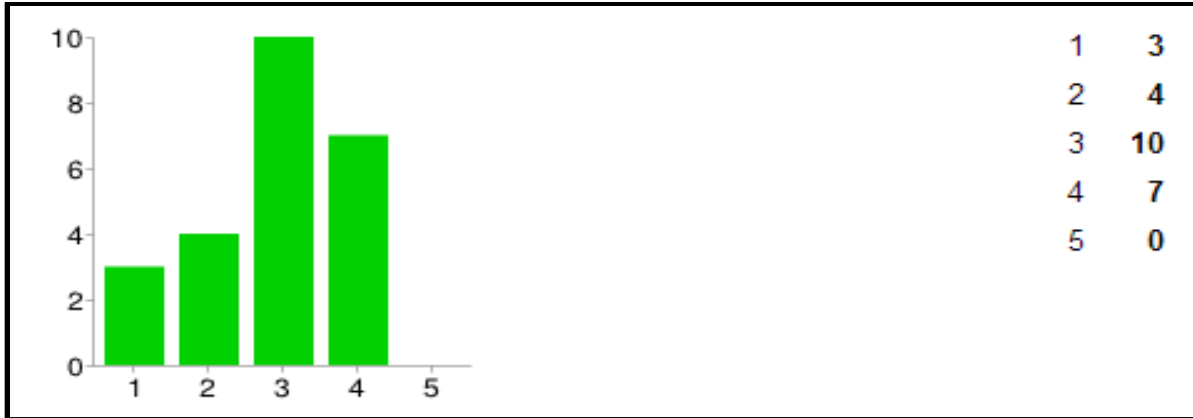
Inexperienced teachers often struggle with classroom management, lack extended knowledge with education pedagogy, and do not have the background to deal with students who are struggling with both discipline and academics.

Based on the data from the Academy, there is a high teacher turnover rate and the majority of the staff is relatively inexperienced. Regardless of the fact that many provisions have been explored to try to provide high needs schools with well skilled teachers a serious disparity still exists (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014, p. 2). The inexperience of the staff and high turnover rates of teachers impact the discipline structure at the Academy and contributes to the lack of student academic success.

Perceptions of the Academy

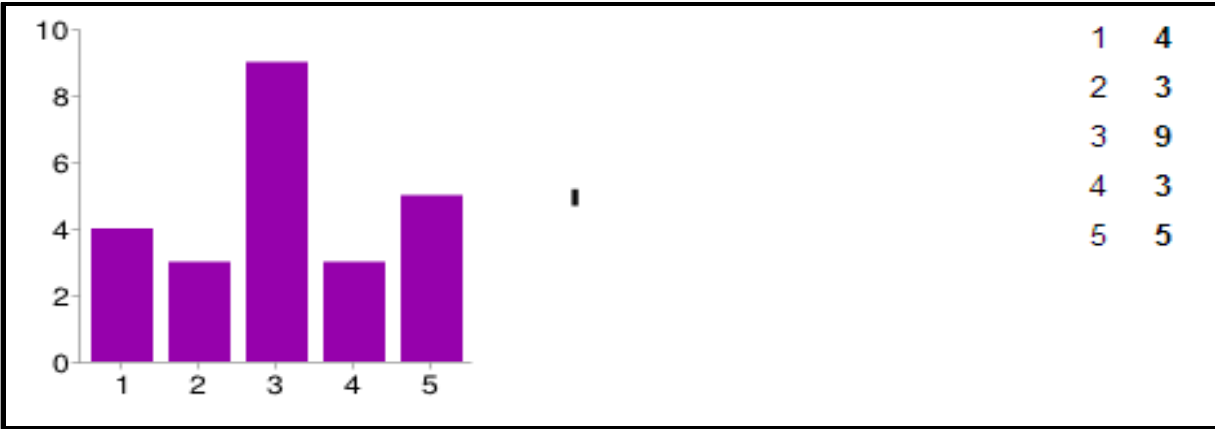
Parents/guardians responses to the question whether the school district cares about the Academy were in the following categories: 12% (3 out of 24) “strongly disagree,” 17% (4 out of 24) “disagree,” 42% (10 out of 24) “neutral,” 29% (7 out of 24) “agree,” and 0% (0 out of 24) “strongly agree” (see Figure 32).

When asked if the school is a “dumping ground” for bad students, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 17% (4 out of 24) “strongly disagree,” 12% (3 out of 24) “disagree,” 38% (9 out of 24) “neutral,” 12% (3 out of 24) “agree,” and 21% (5 out of 24) “strongly agree” (see Figure 33).



Note. When asked if the school district cares about the school, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 12% “strongly disagree,” 17% “agree,” 42% “neutral,” 29% “agree,” and 0% “strongly agree.”

Figure 32. Parent/Guardian thoughts on whether the school district cares about the school.



Note. When asked if the school is a “dumping ground” for bad students, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 17% “strongly disagree,” 12% “disagree,” 38% “neutral,” 12% “agree,” and 21% “strongly agree.”

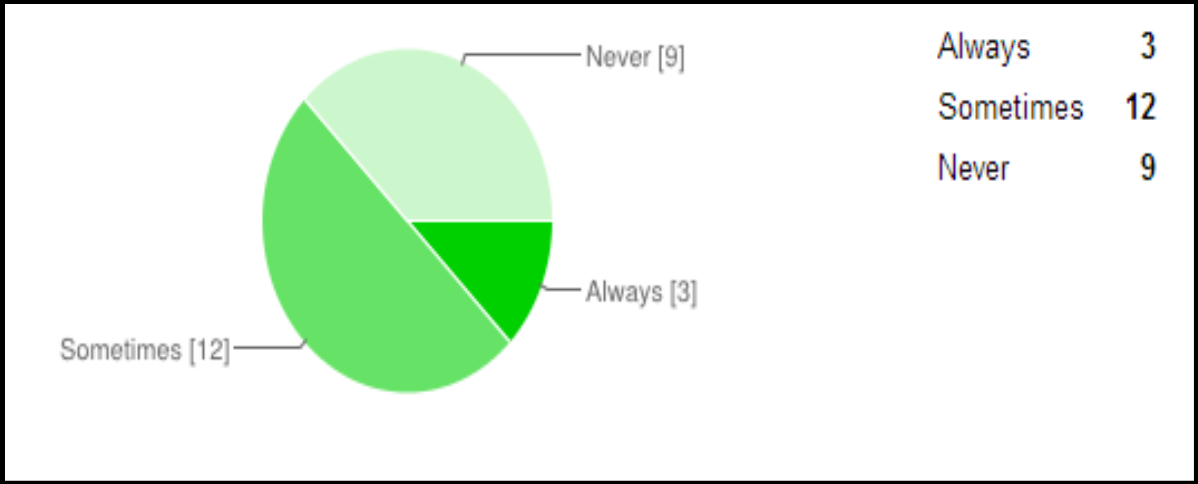
Figure 33. Parent/Guardian thoughts on the Academy being a “dumping ground.”

When asked about their child's comments about the Academy, 50% (12 out of 24) of parent/guardian respondents stated that they sometimes hear their child speak negatively about the school, 39% (9 out of 24) stated never, and 12% (3 out of 24) stated always (see Figure 34).

Responses to the communities' comments regarding the Academy, 46% (11 out of 24) of parent/guardian respondents stated that they sometimes hear negative comments about the school in the community, 42% (10 out of 24) stated that they never hear negative comments, and 12% (3 out of 24) stated that they always hear negative comments (see Figure 35).

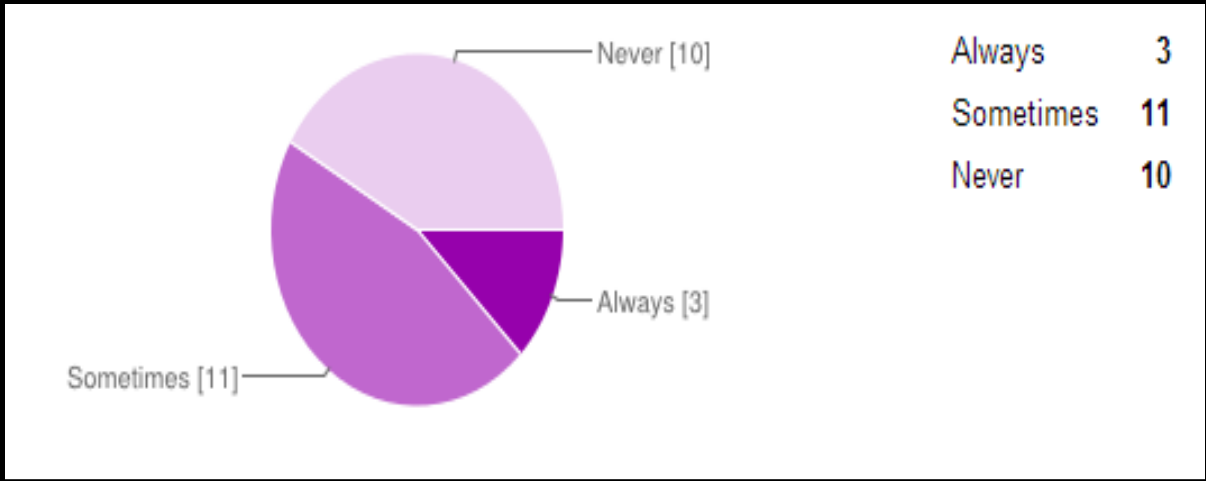
These negative opinions are supported by data according to graduation rate comparisons of the alternative school with the only high school in the county. The ten-year dropout rate for the school district in Southeastern North Carolina remained constant until the 2007-2008 school year and increased substantially since that year. In April 2014, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reported that the district in Southeast North Carolina has one of the top ten highest dropout rates out of the 115 school districts in the state (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>). Based on the North Carolina Public Schools Report Cards (2012-2013) indicated that the graduation rate for the Academy was 43.5%, for the district was 72.8%, and for the state of North Carolina was 82.5% (Retrieved from <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?Page=2&pSchCode=316&pLEACode=830&pYear=2012-2013>).

Furthermore, the fact that it is a separate alternative school, adds to the stereotype that exists. When asked if the school should become a program and not a school, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% (1 out of 14) "strongly disagree," 7% (1 out of 14)



Note. Guardians/parents responses to 50% of parent/guardian respondents stated that they sometimes hear their child speak negatively about the school, 39% stated never, and 12% stated always.

Figure 34. Parent/Guardian thoughts on children communicating negatively about the school.



Note. Responses to hearing negative comments in the community regarding the Academy were 46% of parent/guardian respondents sometimes hear negative comments about the school in the community, 42% never hear comments, and 13% always hear comments.

Figure 35. Parent/Guardian thoughts on negative comments in community.

“disagree,” 29% (4 out of 14) “neutral,” 21% (3 out of 14) “agree,” and 36% (5 out of 14) “strongly agree” (see Figure 36).

Comments by faculty on how the Academy could be better included a wide range of suggestions such as participating in sports, technical programs, and more emotional support resources (see Figure 37).

Other programs across the country have incorporated components to address the needs of the student population and have proven to be successful. One example of a successful program is the Alternative Instructional Model (AIM), an alternative program in New York, allows students to remain connected to their home school, thus providing the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. Individualized instruction, continuous improvement, scheduling flexibility, community service projects, and an environment rich in student resources have each proven to be valuable elements of successful alternative learning programs to increase student success (Grobe, 2002).

North Carolina school districts have the authority to establish alternative learning programs or alternative learning schools. The organizational structure of an alternative program can be as unique as its student population and the school districts have the flexibility to be able to accomplish this. The school district where the Academy is located has the authority to establish an alternative program to address the needs specific to its population. When determining the structure, a research-based, effective discipline model could be established to meet the needs of the students and increase their likeliness of academic success.

When asked if their perception whether school discipline is fair, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 4% (1 out of 24) “strongly disagree,” 13% (3 out



Note. When asked if the school should become a program and not a school, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% “strongly disagree,” 7% “disagree,” 29% “neutral,” 21% “agree,” and 36% “strongly agree.”

Figure 36. Faculty response to the school becoming a program and not a school.

The Academy would be better if:

- It was a school of choice. At-risk students should be able to choose to attend the Academy because of their personal and academic needs.
- The school had more hands-on programs and classes.
- More staff were available to handle emotional issues.
- [The Academy] would be better if it were viewed as a school that has a special function and purpose to serve those students needing an alternative setting and alternative learning opportunities, and not as a "detention center". We are not here to just babysit problem students, we are here to help students with their problems and give them the opportunity to be just as successful as the students that are still at the high school.
- Students were given more opportunities to succeed in a non-traditional classroom.
- Students could be involved in sports and club activities.
- It had more resources for the kids.
- More differentiation was provided to meet the needs of the unique learners at the school.
- The curriculum was focused on raising students performance to grade level in reading, writing, and math.
- They receive more career, technical courses offering to the students to receive those trades.
- Students were targeted for alternative settings earlier, consistency in structure was utilized from year to year, and a true alternative setting was designed and followed.
- We could get more auxiliary support services. I.E. Exceptional Ed. Behavior support.

Figure 37. Faculty responses to how the Academy could be better.

Discipline

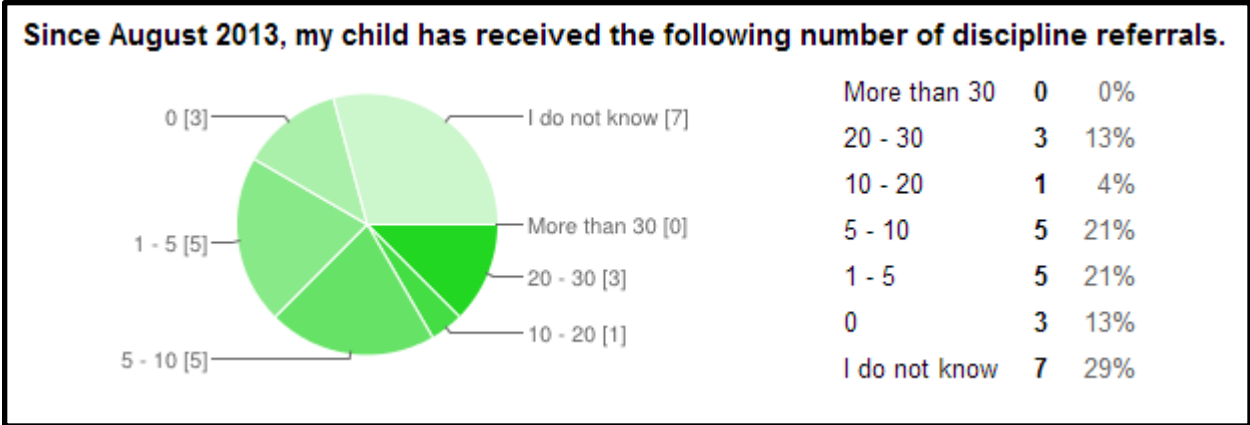
When asked the number of discipline referrals their child had received, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 0% “more than 30,” 13% (3 out of 24) “twenty to thirty,” 4% (1 out of 24) “ten to twenty,” 21% (5 out of 24) “five to ten,” 21% (5 out of 24) “one to five,” 13% (3 out of 24) “zero,” and 29% (7 out of 24) “I do not know.” Nearly one third of the guardian/parent’s responding stated they did not know how many office referrals their child had. Guardians/parents were asked how many office referrals their child had with 38% responding that their child had five to thirty office referrals (see Figure 38). of 24) “disagree,” 38% (9 out of 24) “neutral,” 29% (7 out of 24) “agree,” and 17% (4 out of 24) “strongly agree” (see Figure 39).

Guardian/parents were asked if they received information from their child’s school about PBIS and they responded the following 29% (7 out of 24) said “yes” and 71% (17 out of 24) said “no” (see Figure 40).

When asked their understanding of the handbook regarding discipline policies, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 0% (0 out of 24) “strongly disagree,” 4% (1 out of 24) “disagree,” 46% (11 out of 24) “neutral,” 21% (5 out of 24) “agree,” and 29% (7 out of 24) “strongly agree” (see Figure 41).

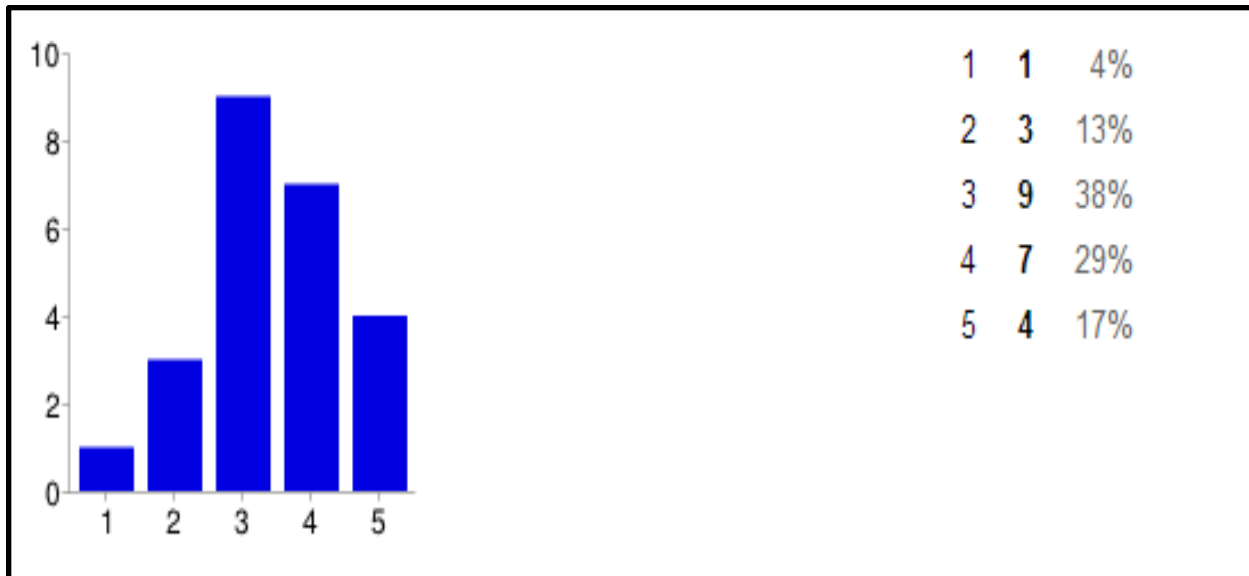
Guardians/parents were asked if they believe that the school impacts student discipline, responses were in the following categories: 4% “strongly disagree,” 29% “disagree,” 50% “neutral,” 8% “agree,” and 8% “strongly agree” (see Figure 42).

Guardians/Parents were asked, “How does the alternative setting at the Academy impact student discipline?” Responses ranged from “Great”, “Students still get in trouble at the



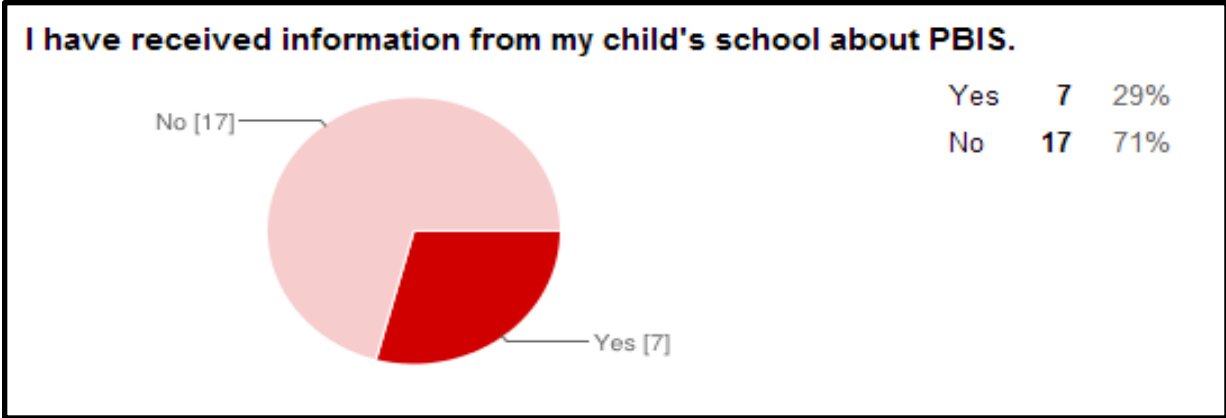
Note. Parent/guardian were asked the number of discipline referrals their child received, respondents were in the following categories: 0% “more than 30,” 13% “twenty to thirty,” 4% “ten to twenty,” 21% “five to ten,” 21% “one to five,” 13% “zero,” and 29% “I do not know.”

Figure 38. Parent/Guardian response to the number of discipline referrals for their child.



Note. When asked if their perception whether school discipline is fair, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 4% “strongly disagree,” 13% “disagree,” 38% “neutral,” 29% “agree,” and 17% “strongly agree.”

Figure 39. Parent/Guardian response to their perception whether school discipline is fair.



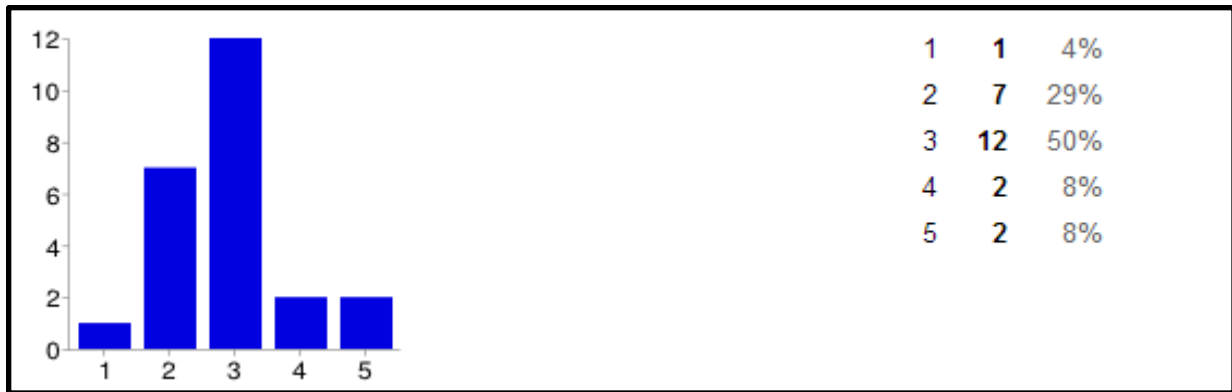
Note. When asked if they received information from their child’s school about PBIS, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 29% “yes,” and 71% “no.”

Figure 40. Parent/Guardian response to if they have received information on PBIS.



Note. When asked their understanding of the handbook regarding discipline policies, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 0% “strongly disagree,” 4% “disagree,” 46% “neutral,” 21% “agree,” and 29% “strongly agree.”

Figure 41. Parent/Guardian understanding of handbook regarding discipline policies.



Note. When asked if they believe that the school impacts student discipline, parent/guardian respondents were in the following categories: 4% “strongly disagree,” 29% “disagree,” 50% “neutral,” 8% “agree,” and 8% “strongly agree.”

Figure 42. Parent/Guardian response to if they believe that the school impacts student discipline.

Academy and are suspended from school”, and “Negative, all bad students at one school” (see Figure 43).

According to research by Henderson and Berla (1994), when student’s parents are involved in school the students have increased academic performance and high school graduation rates and less behavior problems. When guardians/parents reply to questions and 29% indicate they do not know how times their child has had a discipline referral there is an evident disconnect between the school and the parent being involved. This lack of knowledge by parents regarding their student’s discipline referrals demonstrates that parents are not playing a necessary role in their child’s education and this contributes to the lack of their academic success.

When asked about PBIS (Positive Behavioral & Intervention Support), 71% of guardians/parents stated that they have not been provided any information on it. If the guardians/parents are truly not provided this information a message is being sent that it is not a priority at the school. To increase parental support and involvement it is important that parents are knowledgeable of the behavior procedures that are in place; especially when the student has been sent to an alternative setting for behavior and their academic success relies heavily on their behavior. Since PBIS is based on a positive approach, if parents were familiar with it they could work in a partnership with the school to encourage and reward this behavior in and out of school. The responses indicate that the parents are not familiar with the PBIS. When 71% (17 out of 24) of guardians/parents said “no” they were not provided any information on PBIS this strongly indicates that the established discipline program is not consistent or is nonexistent which has to impact the students’ behavior and academic performance (see Figure 40).

Guardians/parents were asked, “If their perception whether school discipline is fair.” A total of 38% responded neutrally. The question was asked if the guardians/parents believe the

How does the alternative setting at the Academy impact student discipline?

- My grandson has been better at the Academy; not so many kids.
- They do a good job.
- Great
- Okay
- I don't know.
- No answer
- Good
- Keep students under control.
- Negative, all bad students at one school
- I think it is needed in order to keep the students aware that negative behaviors are not tolerated.
- No comment
- No answer
- The Academy has a very positive impact on my child. He hasn't had any major write ups or suspension at this school.
- I don't know, not at the school.
- I don't know. I'm not there.
- Students still get in trouble.
- Students still get in trouble at the Academy and are suspended from school.

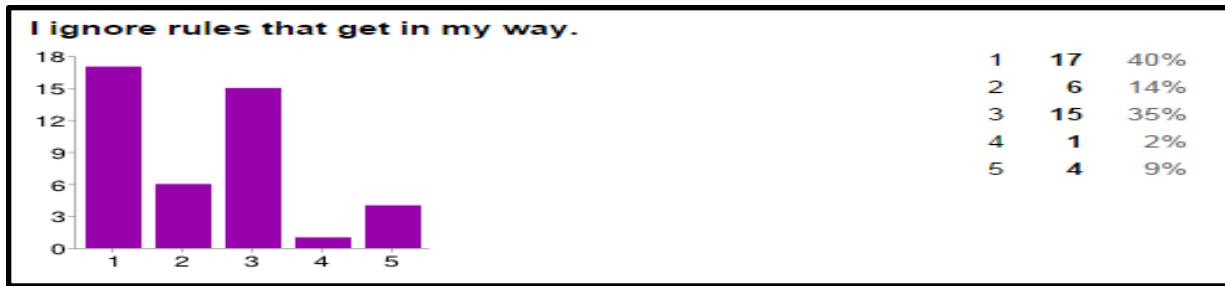
Figure 43. Parent/Guardian thoughts on discipline.

school impacts student discipline and 50% responded with a “Neutral”. As a school administrator, this would be an indicator to delve deeper to investigate what was meant by “neutral”. Determining whether it was because guardians/parents were not familiar with the discipline policies, were not concerned, or the other reasons that may have influenced this response. Then deciding what could be done to improve this concern. A better understanding could contribute to a more consistent discipline policy at the Academy and more support from the home.

When asked if they ignore the rules to get their way, student respondents were in the following categories: 40% (17 out of 43) “strongly disagree,” 14% (6 out of 43) “disagree,” 35% (15 out of 43) “neutral,” 2% (1 out of 43) “agree,” and 9% (4 out of 43) “strongly agree” (see Figure 44).

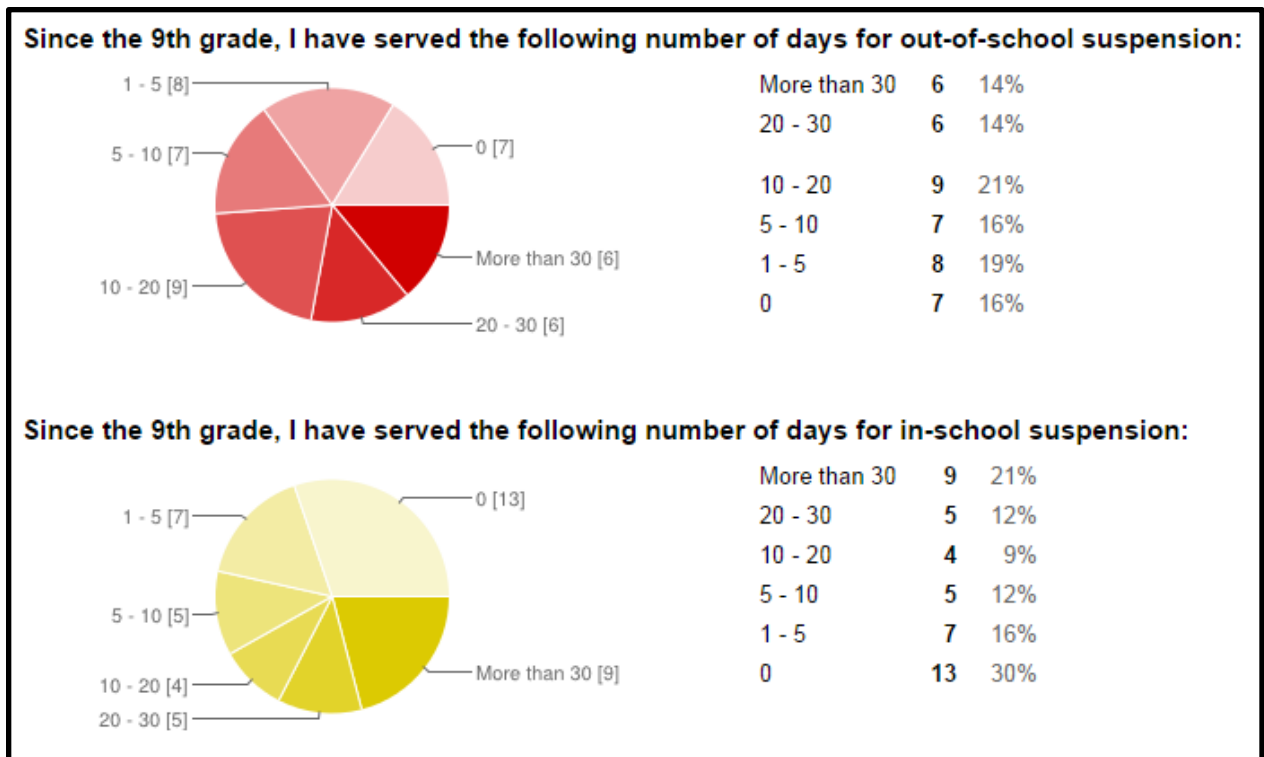
When asked the number and types of suspensions they have had since the 9th grade, student respondents for out-of-school: 14% (6 out of 43) “more than thirty,” 14% (6 out of 43) “twenty to thirty,” 21% (9 out of 43) “ten to twenty,” 16% (7 out of 43) “five to ten,” 19% (8 out of 43) “one to five,” and 16 (7 out of 43) “zero.” Regarding in-school suspensions: 21% (9 out of 43) “more than thirty,” 12% (5 out of 43) “twenty to thirty,” 9% (4 out of 43) “ten to twenty,” 12% (5 out of 43) “five to ten,” 16% (7 out of 43) “one to five,” and 13% (13 out of 43) “zero” (see Figure 45).

When asked if they understand the discipline policies, student respondents were in the following categories: 7% (3 out of 43) “strongly disagree,” 2% (1 out of 43) “disagree,” 21% (9 out of 43) “neutral,” 16% (7 out of 43) “agree,” and 53% (23 out of 43) “strongly agree” (see Figure 46).



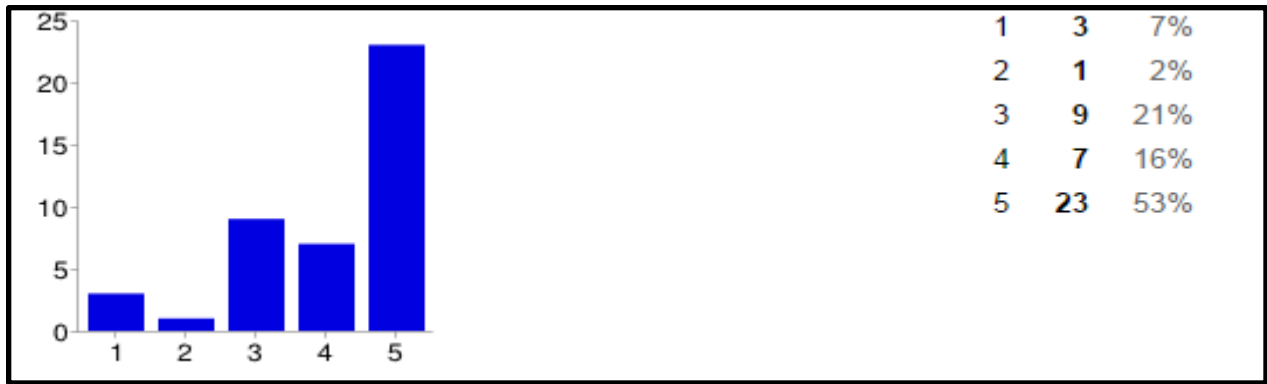
Note. When asked if they ignore the rules to get their way, student respondents were in the following categories: 40% “strongly disagree,” 14% “disagree,” 35% “neutral,” 2% “agree,” and 9% “strongly agree.”

Figure 44. Students’ responses to if they ignore the rules to get their way.



Note. When asked the number and types of suspensions they have had since the 9th grade, student respondents for out-of-school: 14% “more than thirty,” 14% “twenty to thirty,” 21% “ten to twenty,” 16% “five to ten,” 19% “one to five,” and 16% “zero.” Regarding in-school suspensions responses were as follows: 21% “more than thirty,” 12% “twenty to thirty,” 9% “ten to twenty,” 12% “five to ten,” 16% “one to five,” and 13% “zero.”

Figure 45. Students’ responses to the number and types of suspensions they have had since the 9th grade.



Note. When asked if they understand the discipline policies, student respondents were in the following categories: 7% “strongly disagree,” 2% “disagree,” 21% “neutral,” 16% “agree,” and 53% “strongly agree.”

Figure 46. Students’ responses to if they understand the discipline policies.

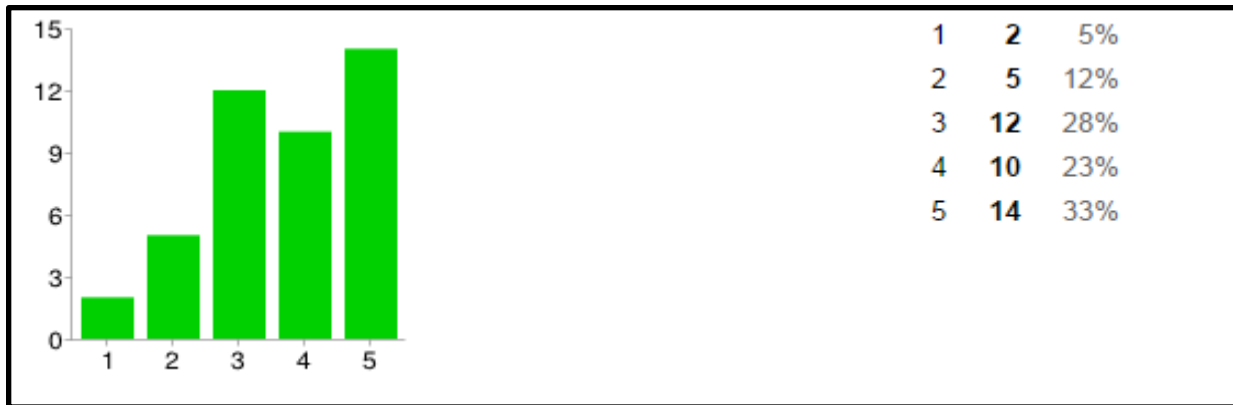
When asked if they believe discipline procedures are carried out fairly at the Academy, student respondents were in the following categories: 5% (2 out of 43) “strongly disagree,” 12% (5 out of 43) “disagree,” 28% (12 out of 43) “neutral,” 23% (10 out of 43) “agree,” and 33% (14 out of 43) “strongly agree” (see Figure 47).

When asked if they recognize that PBIS is being used at the Academy, student respondents were in the following categories: 30% (13 out of 43) “strongly disagree,” 14% (6 out of 43) “disagree,” 28% (12 out of 43) “neutral,” 9% (4 out of 43) “agree,” and 19% (8 out of 43) “strongly agree” (see Figure 48).

When asked if they think the Academy impacts discipline, student respondents were in the following categories: 5% (2 out of 43) “strongly disagree,” 9% (4 out of 43) “disagree,” 37% (16 out of 43) “neutral,” 23% (10 out of 43) “agree,” and 26% (11 out of 43) “strongly agree” (see Figure 49).

Students who responded to the question regarding discipline indicated that most do not feel they blatantly disregard rules to get their way with 54% replying with a “strongly disagree” or “disagree”. Simultaneously, the data shows that most of the students stated they understand the discipline policies. Based on these responses, it appears most students intend to follow the rules and understand them, but when examining the suspension rates, most students are breaking the rules enough to warrant a suspension.

Responses by students stated that 84% said they have been given an out of school suspension of at least one to five days and 65% of those were given more than five days. With 87% of students indicating they have been given in school suspension for at least one to five days and 71% of those have had more than five days. Interestingly even though a substantial



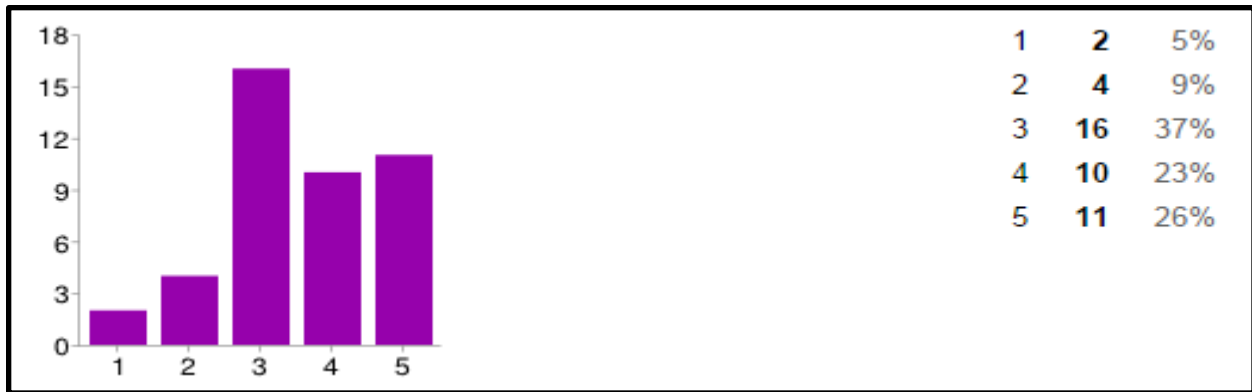
Note. When asked if they believe discipline procedures are carried out fairly at the Academy, student respondents were in the following categories: 5% “strongly disagree,” 12% “disagree,” 28% “neutral,” 23% “agree,” and 33% “strongly agree.”

Figure 47. Students’ responses to if they believe discipline procedures are carried out fairly at the Academy.



Note. When asked if they recognize that PBIS is being used at the Academy, student respondents were in the following categories: 30% “strongly disagree,” 14% “disagree,” 28% “neutral,” 9% “agree,” and 19% “strongly agree.”

Figure 48. Students’ responses to if they recognize that PBIS is being used at the Academy.



Note. When asked if they think the Academy impacts discipline, student respondents were in the following categories: 5% “strongly disagree,” 9% “disagree,” 37% “neutral,” 23% “agree,” and 26% “strongly agree.”

Figure 49. Students’ responses to if they think the Academy impacts discipline.

number of the students who responded were suspended, the majority indicated they thought the discipline was fair with a response of 56% stating they “strongly agree” or “agree”.

As a practitioner, exploring where the disconnect is occurring between the students’ and the school’s perceptions of discipline would help provide a more effective solution to assisting students to comply with the rules and result in less disciplinary actions and more academic success.

The majority of the students believe the academy impacts discipline with 46% responding with a “strongly agree” or “agree”. A significant percentage responded with a “neutral” at 37%. The students’ and parents’ replies to this question were in sync. Further questions would be helpful regarding why a noteworthy number of students responded with a “neutral”. Is it due to the fact they do not really know if the Academy affects discipline or if they are not interested? Additional responses would be very insightful into the perceptions of the students and could assist in impacting discipline decision making for the Academy.

Students were asked if they recognized that PBIS is used at the Academy. Only 28% of the students stated that they “strongly agree” or “agree”. This response percentage indicates that less than a third realizes that PBIS is a serious priority at the Academy. Data proved by the guardians/parents demonstrated the same outcomes since 71% of them denoted that they never received information regarding PBIS. Such a lack of knowledge of PBIS at the Academy by the students and guardians/parents should be an indicator that the implementation is greatly lacking and should be a priority. These responses also indicate that if this is the established discipline program and no one knows about it that this could be a serious contributing factor to the number of suspensions and discipline referrals.

The students' actual comments on if they feel the alternative setting at the Academy impacts student discipline were extremely thought provoking (see Figure 50). It provided a look at the perceptions of the Academy from a student's viewpoint. Responses ranged to extremes. Some negative comments were: "it can keep us at school and not let us go back to [traditional high school]", "it really hurts students mentally and emotionally", and "the word alternative impacts the home because it makes it sound like your bad". Positive comments were: "positive impact", "great", and "it shows them how to do better". A suggested expansion upon this research would be to conduct face to face interviews with students at the Academy to discuss in further detail both the negative and positive responses and garnish feedback from the students.

Faculty Response Data

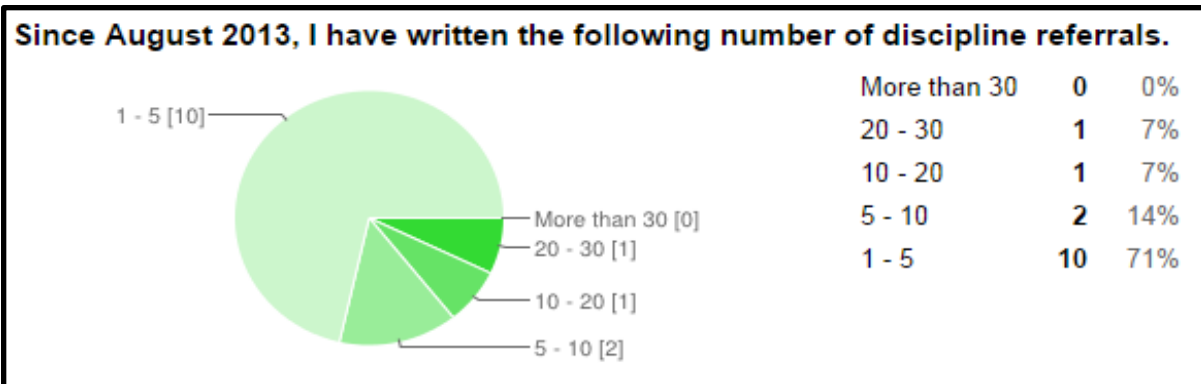
When asked the number of discipline referrals they have written, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 0% (0 out of 14) "more than thirty," 7% (1 out of 14) "twenty to thirty," 7% (1 out of 14) "ten to twenty," 14% (2 out of 14) "five to ten," and 71% (10 out of 14) "one to five" (see Figure 51).

When asked if they have students involved in criminal activity, faculty respondents stated the following: (a) have students who have ever been charged with a violation of the law 86% (12 out of 14) "yes," 7% (1 out of 14) "no," and 7% (1 out of 14) "don't work directly with students"; (b) have students who have ever been convicted of a violation of the law 86% (12 out of 14) "yes," 7% (1 out of 14) "no," and 7% (1 out of 14) "don't work directly with students"; (c) have students on probation from the court system 86% (12 out of 14) "yes," 7% (1 out of 14) "no," and 7% (1 out of 14) "don't work directly with students" (see Figure 52).

How does the alternative setting at the Academy impact student discipline?

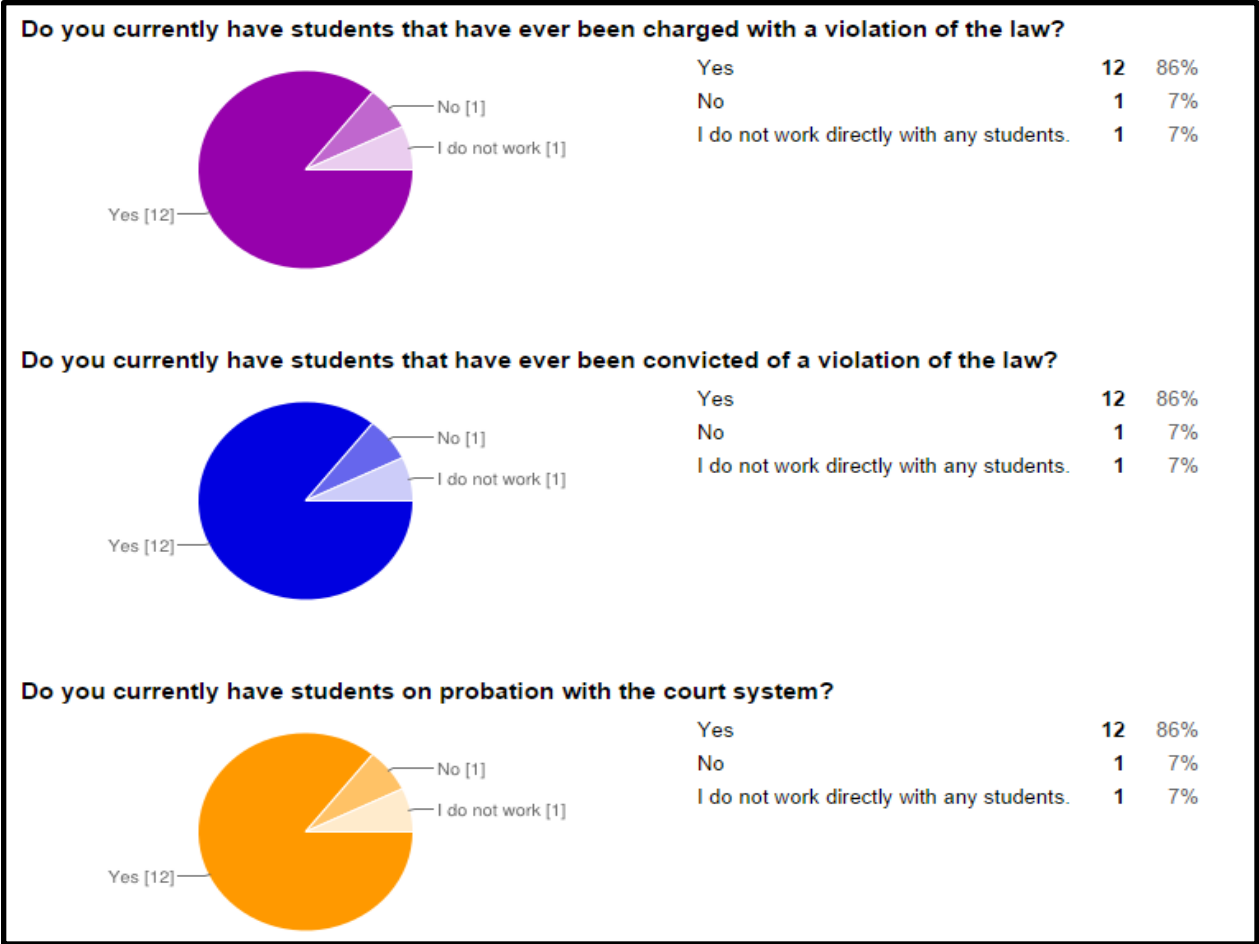
- Keep us at the Academy.
- For the better.
- (Blank)
- Makes the students worse.
- It helps us with our behaviors.
- Not much.
- Great
- I don't know.
- Good
- Make you stay at school longer.
- It can keep us at school and not let us go back to [traditional high school].
- Little
- It don't work for me.
- Positive impact.
- The word alternative impacts the home because it makes it sound like your bad.
- So they will learn not to get in trouble again.
- Put some students in line.
- It really hurts students mentally and emotionally.
- Stupid
- Don't know
- I don't know
- It shows them how to do better.
- Good way.
- Bad
- Adds to it because they are tough.
- Keeps us at the Academy.

Figure 50. Students' comments on if the Academy impacts discipline.



Note. When asked the number of discipline referrals they have written, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 0% “more than thirty,” 7% “twenty to thirty,” 7% “ten to twenty,” 14% “five to ten,” and 71% “one to five.”

Figure 51. Faculty’s responses to the number of discipline referrals they have written.



Note. When asked if they have students involved in criminal activity, faculty respondents stated the following: (a) have students who have ever been charged with a violation of the law 86% “yes,” 7% “no,” and 7% “don’t work directly with students”; (b) have students who have ever been convicted of a violation of the law 86% “yes,” 7% “no,” and 7% “don’t work directly with students”; (c) have students on probation from the court system 86% “yes,” 7% “no,” and 7% “don’t work directly with students.”

Figure 52. Faculty’s responses to if they have students involved in criminal activity.

When asked if they believe discipline procedures were carried out fairly at the Academy, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% (1 out of 14) “strongly disagree,” 21% (3 out of 14) “disagree,” 36% (5 out of 14) “neutral,” 7% (1 out of 14) “agree,” and 29% (4 out of 14) “strongly agree” (see Figure 53).

When asked if they thoroughly reviewed the student handbook, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% (1 out of 14) “strongly disagree,” 14% (2 out of 14) “disagree,” 21% (3 out of 14) “neutral,” 29% (4 out of 14) “agree,” and 29% (4 out of 14) “strongly agree” (see Figure 54).

When asked the if the Academy has an impact on student discipline, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 0% (0 out of 14) “strongly disagree,” 7% (1 out of 14) “disagree,” 29% (4 out of 14) “neutral,” 50% (0 out of 14) “agree,” and 14% (2 out of 14) “strongly agree” (see Figure 55).

When asked if they use PBIS in the classroom, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 14% (2 out of 14) “strongly disagree,” 7% (1 out of 14) “disagree,” 57% (8 out of 14) “neutral,” 14% (2 out of 14) “agree,” and 7% (1 out of 14) “strongly agree” (see Figure 56).

Staff that was surveyed on if they received professional development on how to use PBIS responses were in the following categories: 86% (12 out of 14) “yes” and 14% (2 out of 14) “no” (see Figure 57).

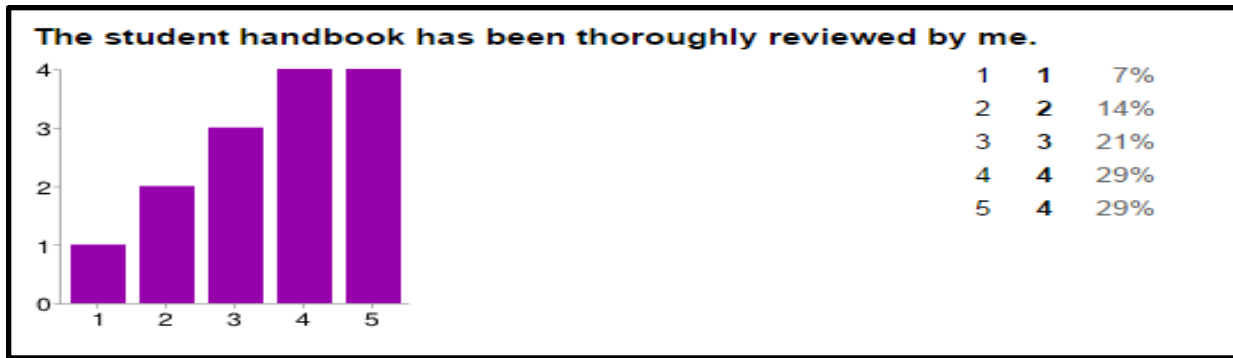
Asked if they received professional development on classroom management, faculty responses were in the following categories: 93% (13 out of 14) “yes” and 7% (1 out of 14) “no” (see Figure 58).

If professional development on working with students with special needs was provided



Note. When asked if they believe discipline procedures were carried out fairly at the Academy, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% “strongly disagree,” 21% “disagree,” 36% “neutral,” 7% “agree,” and 29% “strongly agree.”

Figure 53. Faculty’s responses to if they believe discipline procedures are carried out fairly at the Academy.



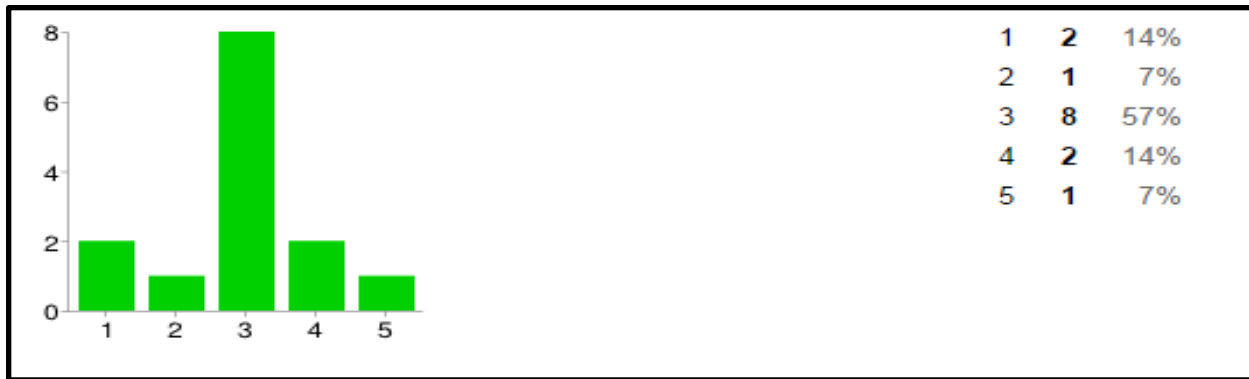
Note. When asked if they thoroughly reviewed the student handbook, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 7% “strongly disagree,” 14% “disagree,” 21% “neutral,” 29% “agree,” and 29% “strongly agree.”

Figure 54. Faculty’s responses to if they had thoroughly reviewed the student handbook.



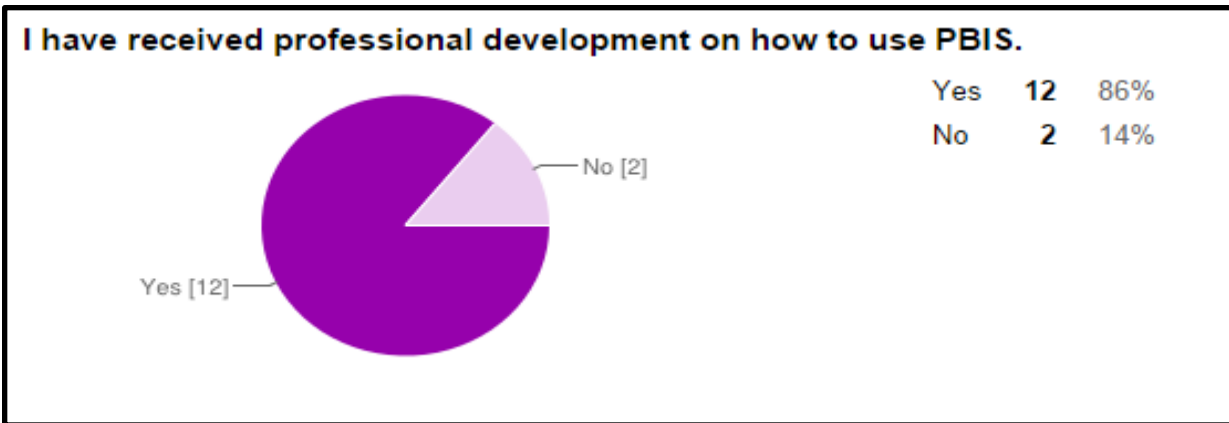
Note. When asked the if the Academy has an impact on student discipline, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 0% “strongly disagree,” 7% “disagree,” 29% “neutral,” 50% “agree,” and 14% “strongly agree.”

Figure 55. Faculty’s responses to if the Academy has an impact on student discipline.



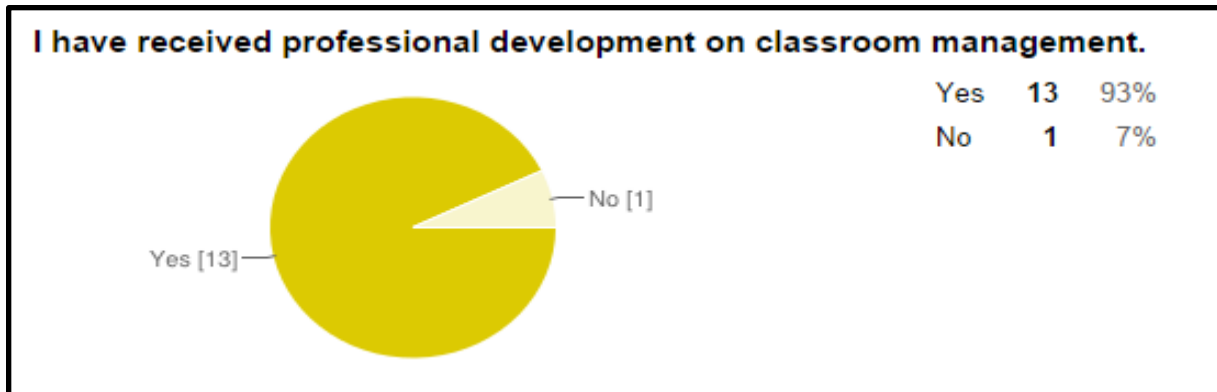
Note. When asked if they use PBIS in the classroom, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 14% “strongly disagree,” 7% “disagree,” 57% “neutral,” 14% “agree,” and 7% “strongly agree.”

Figure 56. Faculty’s responses to who uses PBIS in the classroom.



Note. When asked if they received professional development on how to use PBIS, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 86% “yes” and 14% “no.”

Figure 57. Faculty’s responses to if they received professional development on how to use PBIS.



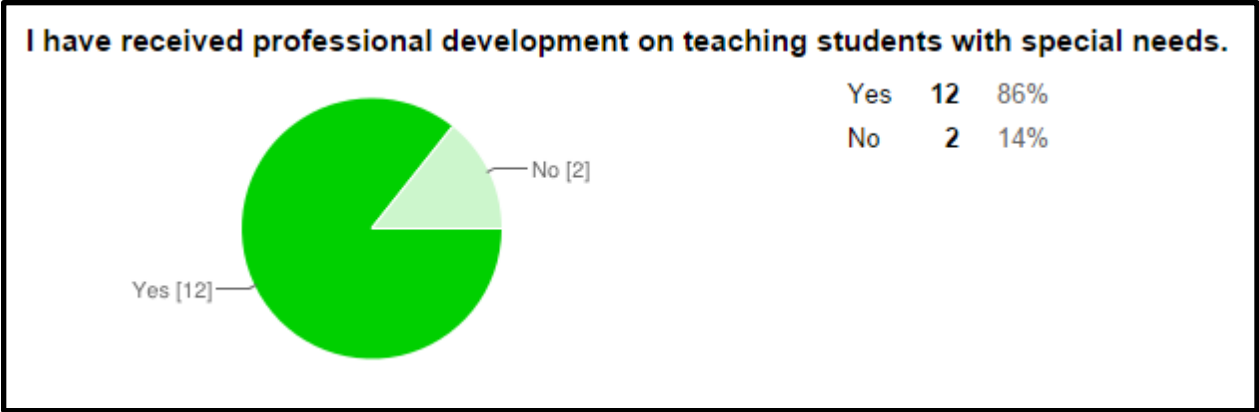
Note. When asked if they received professional development on classroom management, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 93% “yes” and 7% “no.”

Figure 58. Faculty’s responses to if they received professional development on classroom management.

for staff was a question that was asked and faculty respondents were in the following categories: 86% (12 out of 14) “yes” and 14% (2 out of 14) “no” (see Figure 59).

Faculty reporting of data indicates that a high percentage of them have students whom have either been charged with, convicted of, or on probation for a violation of the law with all three of the areas having responses of 86% of the staff saying “yes”. Based upon this information, additional research that would be helpful is to discover if faculty is provided specific training to work with this particular student population. Additionally, it would be helpful to find out if the students are being provided counseling or other interventions to prevent further criminal behavior. Another question is if the school personnel are working with the probation officers or the court system as a partnership to increase the academic success of these students. Using out of school suspensions is not a good choice for discipline, due in part to the fact that a high percentage of students are involved with law violations. These students do not need to be “on the streets” but instead need to be in school and provided interventions to prevent further criminal activity and a chance at an education.

Faculty members were asked if discipline procedures were carried out fairly at the Academy 29% responded that they “strongly agree” and 7% that they “agree”. The faculty at 36% responded with “neutral”, 21% said “disagree”, and 7% stated “strongly disagree”. A significant percentage either provided the answer of “neutral” or that they disagreed that discipline procedures were handled fairly based upon their perception. As a school administrator, this data would be concerning. If the faculty either feels impartially or negatively to the fairness of discipline there are some evident issues that should be discussed. This perception of the faculty could very likely impact the culture and climate of the Academy to include the consistency and fairness of the implementation of the discipline procedures.



Note. When asked if they received professional development on working with students with special needs, faculty respondents were in the following categories: 86% “yes” and 14% “no.”

Figure 59. Faculty’s responses to if they received professional development on working with students with special needs.

The majority of the faculty responded that the Academy had an impact on student discipline with 64% total indicating “strongly agree” or “agree”. This was the highest response rate favoring agreement that it did have an impact based upon the same question that was posed to guardians/parents and students. The incident of guardians/parents and students not scoring it as high could be dependent upon many factors to include familiarity with student discipline incidents collectively, personal relevance, and understanding of the question. Further research would be needed to include direct interviews of the guardians/parents and students to grasp a more in depth understanding of their responses.

When the faculty was asked if they had completed a thorough review of the student handbook less than a third of the responses were “strongly agree” at 29%. Followed by 29% responded that they “agree”, 21% responded with a “neutral”, 14% “disagree”, 7% “strongly disagree”. This means that total 21% of the faculty have either barely or have not at all familiarized themselves with the student handbook. In other words, two thirds of the faculty did not respond that they have a relatively good familiarization with the student handbook guidelines that directly impact students and the implementation of the policies of the Academy. So, the majority of the persons who implement the discipline policies on a daily basis are not very familiar with these policies. This lack of knowledge results in students who are either unfairly or inconsistently punished.

Even though PBIS has been identified as a school wide program and nearly all the staff at 86% responded that they have received training on it, but based upon responses by students, guardians/parents, who said they knew very little about it, this established school wide discipline program is not implemented with fidelity resulting in it being ineffective.

When asked about professional development, 93% of the staff responded that they

received training on classroom management and 86% stated they had training on working with students with special needs. But, 7% or 1 out of 14 staff members stated that they had written twenty to thirty discipline referrals. The same 7% or 1 out of 14 said they had written ten to twenty discipline referrals. The strong majority of the staff, 71% or 10 out of 14, reported only writing one to five. Since such a small percentage of the staff is reporting a high number of referrals compared to the rest of the staff, a school leader should analyze the data for the staff members with the high numbers of referrals. Analysis should include reasons for the referrals, students involved, and steps taken prior to the referrals. Determination should then be made if perhaps further training or interventions should be provided for these specific staff members that would help reduce student discipline referrals.

Faculty members were asked how the alternative setting at the Academy impacts student discipline (see Figure 60). Some responded that the smaller population and setting are better suited for helping these students. Others replied that behaviors are more tolerated and easier to address directly since there are less students. One interesting reply was that regardless of how hard they try that many of the students still do not view the Academy as a “real school”. These direct responses provide additional information and data when trying to ascertain a picture of the culture and climate of the Academy and the effect of the setting on discipline.

Comments from the faculty in regards to how the high school can be improved to prevent students from being assigned to the alternative school vary (see Figure 61). The responses range from “Be more patient and sensitive to their needs” to “Implement more interventions and prevention strategies for the students. Nearly all the responses relate back to the need at the feeder high school to be more proactive as opposed to reactive. When the response is reactive it results in the assignment of these students to the Academy.

How does the alternative setting at the Academy impact student discipline?

- Students are disciplined according to school handbook.
- Smaller setting is better.
- Positively. There are usually fewer instances of student disruptions due to the unique settings.
- Students have a internal belief that they are BAD and so they act out more often. They feel like they are not cared about so they have been placed in an alternative environment.
- Student engagement in virtual learning lessen the interaction among students in the classroom and as a result fewer discipline incidents.
- There are fewer opportunities for discipline problems because of the smaller population. There is also greater opportunity for mediation of conflict.
- Many of our students are unable to function in the traditional setting. This alternative setting is better able to deal with students discipline issues. Sometimes being able to team with other teachers to relocate students to provide them with cool down time improves our ability to deal with conflict and issues those students may have.
- They try to be fair and consistent with every student.
- As hard as the staff and administration try the students still say the Academy isn't a real school.
- I don't see much change in discipline. I think their discipline is more tolerated at the Academy.
- Depends on the student but discipline is enforced but mercy is also.
- Students behavior often gets better because the teachers are more tolerate and compassionate.
- It concentrative a great number of students with emotional behavior and academic problems.
- Not sure.

Figure 60. Faculty's comments regarding the Academy's impact on student discipline.

How can the high school be improved to prevent students from being assigned to the alternative school?

- Consistent procedures, expectations, and policies that are actually followed by all administrators, staff, and faculty members to promote safety in the schools and success for the students.
- Collaboration meeting for students that become borderline of getting sent to the Academy with Principal, Assistant Principal and Staff that work directly with students to see how that can be prevented.
- Not sure, because I do not know the procedures they are using now.
- Creating and maintaining a consistent structure of rules and procedures school-wide. Allowing for more flexibility in scheduling.
- Be more patient and sensitive to their needs.
- Stop the behaviors in the beginning many students get a slap on the wrist for the same offenses over and over. Parents need to be held responsible.
- More intervention before the student's needs are too far gone.
- Using PBIS supports and fair disciplinary actions by teachers and administration. Often times students are labeled by their teachers, their teacher usually lose their compassion and drive to work with difficult students and their focus becomes removing the student from their class (not trying to figure out ways to learn to reach this student).
- Implement behavior programs educate students on current discipline policy, enforce rules.
- I do not know what the main high school has been doing to prevent students from coming to the Academy. I do not think I can provide a quality response to this question.
- Consistent discipline.
- Have more procedures in place for discipline to alleviate problems from the beginning.
- Provide an in-school or after-school suspension program focusing on improving behavior and continuing education.
- Implement more interventions and prevention strategies.

Figure 61. Parent/Guardian's responses to how the high school can be improved to prevent students from being assigned to the alternative school.

Findings

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina.

The following research questions were addressed as related to the purpose of the study:

1. What are the **demographic factors** of the students, parents/guardians, and faculty that influence discipline issues?
2. What are the **varying perspectives** regarding the reputation of the alternative school?
3. How is the **implementation of the discipline model** viewed by students, parents/guardians, and faculty?
4. How is the **faculty prepared** to meet the specific needs of the at-risk students at this alternative school?

Findings presented are based upon research surveys using Likert Scale questions and short answer responses.

1. The student population of the Academy is comprised of minorities with Blacks at 58% and Native Americans at 21% and is representative of the identified population as being suspended and disciplined more often nationally (see Figure 28). The student population of the Academy is disproportionately comprised of mostly minorities compared to the demographic makeup of the area. Based on Census Data (2015), the local populace is comprised of approximately 43% White, 46.8% Black, 6.1% American Indian, 2% two or more races, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3737220.html>).
 - According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2012), in 2012-2013 and historically, Black and American Indian males, and special

education students were suspended at a higher rate than other demographics in North Carolina (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2012-13/consolidated-report.pdf>, p. 23).

- Iselin (2010), Hinojosa (2008), and Mendez and Knoff (2003) all noted that this disproportionality exist nationwide when researching suspensions and discipline in public schools.
2. The majority of the students' families are single parent homes with 74% indicating the mother lives with the student and 35% indicating the father is in the home (see Figure 29). Since more minority families are single parent homes and the Academy is comprised of mostly minorities, this should be an area of focus due to its applicability. The awareness that students are more academically successful if both parents are involved with school should be an urgent issue for any school district and especially the one that was studied. School districts cannot impact who lives in the home, but they can do as much as possible to reach out to families and encourage them to participate in school activities. More parental involvement, as supported by data, would assist in improving behavior, thus increasing student performance.
- Based on the research by Henderson and Berla (1994), students do better in school if the father and the mother are involved, even if the father does not live with the student.
 - As of 2013 according to Childtrends.org, 67% of Black children lived in single homes, 52% of Native American children, and 25% of White children (Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=parental-involvement-in-schools>).

3. The county where the Academy is located has twice the state poverty rate. The county has 35.9% poverty rate compared to 17.5% in the state (see Figure 33). Based on this fact, the researcher believes this is a substantial factor that increases the odds of students experiencing discipline and academic issues.
 - Research by Jensen (2009) indicates that students coming from poverty are more likely to move from place to place, experience developmental delays, have higher incidence of medical issues, and fall behind in school.
 - Schools with lower socio-economic students have higher suspension rates (Iselin, 2010).
 - Based upon research by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), poor children are more often identified with behavioral and emotional issues compared to their counterparts.
 - Children from low socioeconomic households demonstrated higher incidents of problems with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Iselin, 2010, p. 62).
4. The alternative Academy and the school district have very high teacher turnover rates both at 40% compared to both the state at 19% and national at 13%. Something needs to be done to increase retention and create a more quality, stable learning environment for these students. Turnover rates affect not only discipline in the school; it also impacts the moral, organizational structure, and the reputation of the school. Teacher turnover is higher in schools that have greater low socio-economic, minority populations, which is true of the Academy. Teacher turnover disproportionally impacts minority students from low socio-economic schools (Guin, 2004, p. 3).

- Nationally the teacher turnover rate is 13% (Alliance for Excellent Teaching, 2014, p. 2). For the state of North Carolina the teacher turnover rate it is 19%; in the school district where the Academy is located it is 40%; at the Academy it is 40% (Retrieved from <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?Page=2&pSchCode=316&pLEA Code=830&pYear=2012-2013>).
 - Based on a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), “This high turnover rate disproportionately affects high-poverty schools and seriously compromises the nation’s capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching.”
5. The identified discipline program, PBIS, is neither a priority or implemented with fidelity. Neither students nor parents have been provided information on it (see Figures 40 and 48). When very few of both the students and parents knowing anything about the discipline program that is in place, it is no wonder that there are significant behavior issues occurring. Students and parents cannot be expected to abide by policies and procedures that they know nothing about. Inconsistent with the parents’ and students’ responses, nearly all the faculty responded that they were trained in it. This is an alarming indicator of the lack of leadership occurring in this school since the leader sets the culture of expectations.
- Based upon research by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), poor children are more often identified with behavioral and emotional issues compared to their counterparts.

- Children from low socioeconomic households demonstrated higher incidents of problems with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Iselin, 2010, p. 62).
 - According to research by Henderson and Berla (1994), when student's parents are involved in school the students have increased academic performance and high school graduation rates and less behavior problems.
6. The graduation rate for the Academy was alarming at 43.5%, the district was 72.8%, and the state of North Carolina was 82.5%. The graduation rate for the Academy, compared to the district and state, was alarming to this researcher. To increase graduation rates the researcher suggests addressing the many areas of concern that impact the likeliness of graduation for students to include: organizational structure of the school district, teacher turnover rates, community resources, parental involvement, perception of the Academy, and teacher professional development. Graduation rates will not change if many factors are not analyzed and addressed.
- According to research by Henderson and Berla (1994), when students' parents are involved in school the students have increased academic performance and high school graduation rates and less behavior problems.
7. A significant number of guardians/parents did not know how many times their child had a discipline referral at a response rate of 29% (see Figure 38). According to research by Henderson and Berla (1994), when students parents are involved in school the students have increased academic performance and high school graduation rates and less behavior problems.
8. The Academy does not have a positive reputation in the community. When asked 46% of guardians/parents said they sometimes hear negative comments in the community and

13% reported they always hear negative comments (see Figure 35). To increase the community perception of the Academy requires so many interrelated changes to occur. Much of this negative reputation is due to the lack of academic success of the Academy and the lack of a clear discipline policy.

- As stated by Guin (2004), “Turnover is probably a symptom of a deeper problem- -a school’s negative reputation among teachers, a contentious relationship between school staff and the community, or some other factor that leads teachers to avoid the school” (p. 20).

9. Many of the students have a negative view of the school. Guardians/parents indicating that they hear their child speak negatively about that Academy at 50% saying sometimes and 13% always (see Figure 34). This researcher realized that many of the students did not have a positive view of the Academy; the same perception as the community. When a school is viewed or referred to as a “dumping ground” or not a priority for the district this has an impact on the student’s perception of the schools and themselves for being a student at that school. Also, the fact that the graduation rates is so low, teacher turnover is high, and no clear discipline policy is evident, all have to play a role in how students feel about the Academy. The student probably in many cases has a low self-esteem and the culture at the Academy is not helping that.
10. Eighty-six percent of students have been convicted of a crime, 86% have been charged with a crime, and 86% are on probation (see Figure 52). But, based on the research conducted there does not appear to be any type of interventions or additional staff member who work to break this cycle of issues with the law. It is also evident that no

specialized professional development or training is provided for faculty to better meet the needs of this specific population to include poverty.

- Schools with lower socio-economic students have higher suspension rates (Iselin, 2010).
- Based upon research by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), poor children are more often identified with behavioral and emotional issues compared to their counterparts.
- Children from low socioeconomic households demonstrated higher incidents of problems with internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Iselin, 2010, p. 62).

11. The majority of the faculty expressed they did not have a thorough knowledge of the student handbook with 7% at “strongly disagree”, 14% “disagree”, and 21% “neutral” (see Figure 54). This researcher was dismayed by the responses that the majority of the faculty expressed they did not have a thorough knowledge of the student handbook. These are the people who enforce procedures and policies every day but they do not have a very good understanding of the expectations established for the students.

12. A small percentage of the faculty makes the majority of the discipline referrals with 7% writing 20-30 and another 7% writing 10-20 (see Figure 51). This researcher found it interesting that a small percentage of the faculty made the majority of the discipline referrals. This is something very easy to address by looking at the discipline referral data and interviewing the teachers who are making the majority of the referrals.

- Often the lack of behavioral strategies may be due to lack of teacher professional development, even though classroom management is rated as highly important by both teachers and administrators (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p. 337).

13. The majority of the staff feels discipline is not implemented fairly with 7% stating they “strongly disagree”, 21% “disagree” and 36% “neutral (see Figure 53). This again is one piece of the bigger picture that is concerning. The reality that the majority of the faculty does not perceive the discipline as fair impacts all the factors that are necessary in order for students to be academically successful.
14. Quite a few responses to questions to guardians/parents were answered with a “neutral” (see Figures 36, 37, 43, 45, 46). This researcher found it quite concerning that quite a few responses to questions to guardians/parents were answered with a “neutral”. Taking steps to find out what is meant by “neutral” would be an advantageous step. Finding out whether it is a lack of knowledge, interest, or applicability in order to be able to better use the information to create change that increases student achievement.
15. Nearly all faculty members had professional development on classroom management at 93% and working with students with special needs at 87% (see Figures 62 &63). As far as the researcher can determine none of this professional development was differentiated to address the needs of this specific student population.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are constructed upon the data gathered regarding the purpose of this study which was to identify what factors influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina. All of the recommendations are supported by the research provided in this document.

1. Provide faculty with sustained professional development to address the specific needs of the demographics that are attending the alternative school. Professional

- development should include working with diverse populations, working with students and families from poverty, differentiated learning, and working with at-risk students.
2. Establish a parent involvement plan that increases the partnership and communication between the school and parents. Parent centers, adult classes, luncheons, and many other incentives can be provided to encourage parents to come to the school and become more involved.
 3. Implement with fidelity a research-based discipline model that is monitored. The model needs to also be shared with parents and students consistently. Faculty must be provided professional development, feedback, time for reflection, established professional learning communities, and monitored on the implementation of the program.
 4. Monitor the reasons for office referrals and suspensions. Based upon the data, provide preemptive steps to address frequent issues or provide support for the teachers that are making frequent referrals.
 5. Establish programs and alternative routes for learning must to encourage students to attend school and increase their academic performance. Such things as industry certifications, job internships, and mentoring are all programs that can assist with this. These programs need to be ones other than the same things that were offered at the traditional high school that does not work for every learner.
 6. Provide additional counseling and interventions to address the high incidents of criminal behavior that students at the Academy are involved in. Provide root cause interventions to attempt to change behaviors.

7. Create programs to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Provide incentives to attract minority candidates.
8. Initiate a community outreach program that helps to rebrand and create a more positive image of the alternative schools. Perhaps by creating innovative projects, such as a community garden, that can be highlighted in the local newspaper. Tap into community resources for positive partnerships and resources.
9. Establish in a research-based in-school suspension program so that students are still receiving academic instruction and are not being put out on the streets.

Summary and Conclusions

This researcher posed the question regarding the factors that influence the implementation of discipline as it relates to a low performing alternative school in Southeastern North Carolina. The findings provided much data that is beneficial to this researcher to determine the various factors that were influential when implementing discipline.

Data that were collected which provided the demographics of the students that were suspended and ultimately placed at the Academy provided helpful information. Most students were minorities, living in single parent homes, and coming from poverty. Knowing this data helped this researcher to relate these characteristics as ones that are supported with academic research as the population who has demonstrated more likeliness of encountering issues with both behaviors and academics.

When analyzing and reflecting upon the data it showed that there was not a consistent and coherent discipline model in place at the Academy. It was noted that PBIS was supposed to be the model and faculty was provided training on it. But, the research indicated that a strong majority of the guardians/parents and students knew nothing about PBIS. Also, the data shows

the majority of the faculty did not have a thorough understanding of the handbook. All of these factors create an environment where discipline cannot possibly be implemented fairly and consistently; therefore, have a residual negative impact on student achievement.

Students were either disciplined or suspended a repeated number of times. Indications of these findings are that the discipline being used is not fundamentally changing behaviors at the Academy. This lack of addressing these behaviors at the root cause or in a manner that motivates students to change greatly impacts the students' learning success.

Another factor in the data was the element that there appears to be a significant detachment between the guardians/parents and the personnel of the Academy. This is supported by the data that showed that many guardians/parents responded that they had no idea if their child had been disciplined by the school. In the data, many parents responded with "neutral" to more than one question. This response provokes questions on what was meant by the response. When the guardians/parents are not involved in their child's school and the school and the parents are not working in partnership the students are more likely to demonstrate negative choices leading to failure; which is exactly what is happening at the Academy as indicated by the data.

The data also showed that the faculty was not provided professional development specific to the learning needs of these students to include discipline strategies. Responses collected designate that faculty received general classroom management and working with students with special needs but that there was no specific training on strategies for working with this specific population of students. Data provided disclosed that the vast majority of the student had encounters with the court system and were currently on probation. No indication of addressing the behaviors and issues surrounding the needs of this particular population was found.

The feeder high school into the Academy has a graduation rate that is approximately 10% below the state graduation rate; but, at the Academy the graduation rate is about 50% below the state. Based on the data, the discipline employed currently at the Academy is not meeting the needs of these particular learners and consequently is not leading to the majority of them being academically successful and graduating. Since the feeder high school and the Academy are below the state rate, it is not just the problems at the Academy that should be examined. A comprehensive look at the school district needs to be a focus.

When reviewing the data, this researcher noted the Academy and district have very high teacher turnover rates compared to the state and national averages. With lack of stability of faculty many factors come into play to include difficulty in establishing a cohesive faculty, lack of a trusting environment, a lack of a consistent instructional implementation, and a negative impact on the organizational structure as a whole. All of these factors contribute to creating a challenge for consistent, fair discipline implementation.

Data showed that overall the Academy does not have a positive image in the community and by many students. The school does not appear to be a priority to the district overall based on multiple survey results. Based on responses, the Academy does not provide much needed extra counseling personnel, vocational programs, flexible scheduling, and business partnerships. Lack of all these resources could assist in curtailing discipline by intervening with students' behavior issues and motivating them to accomplish goals. This negative reputation, that seems to be common in community, has to have an influence on the student's self-esteem and attitude towards attending the Academy.

Although the data provided much perceptive information, concurrently it raised more questions and highlighted the need for further research that would be extremely helpful to delve

even deeper into this topic. The data clearly indicates that the suspensions and discipline implementation is not working because it is not causing a changing of behaviors. All of the factors that were surmised through the data that is reflective of the discipline occurring at the Academy cycles back to the leadership or lack thereof. This lack of leadership in many facets of the school, to include the one of this study on the discipline, all ultimately influences the academic success of the students. In this case, the alarming absence of student success is a major issue that most definitely can be positively impacted by a strong leader who systematic implements an effective discipline model. A discipline model that mitigates the root causes of the negative behaviors, keeps students in school learning, and motivates them to do better academically.

Research on academic structures that successfully serve non-traditional students demonstrates that there are many factors that affect the results of these programs. Since a significant portion of the student population that end up participating in these programs are at-risk students, external factors that influence their behaviors need to be addressed by school staff. External influences include factors such as community dynamics and poverty. Current research also indicates that the school leadership, culture of the school, use of suspensions, and classroom management greatly influence the school environment and ultimately the educational success of students. This holds true in both traditional and alternative school settings.

Also supported by research is that systemic change can occur if certain modifications do occur, with the ultimate goal being increased numbers of students graduating from high school and becoming productive members of communities and society. Many school districts are experimenting with novice programs that address discipline issues with more positive results.

This topic would greatly benefit from further research, such as a longitudinal study on the effectiveness of many of these new programs.

Some unintended findings were that discipline policies and procedures at the feeder high school should be examined to decrease discipline referrals overall and to target the cause of them. Another recommendation for further exploration is adding technical certifications at the traditional high school to provide another tool to meet the needs of non-traditional learners.

To summarize, to effect real change schools should implement systemic discipline policies that use out-of-school suspensions rarely and only for delineated reasons. These students need to be in school to learn. In-school suspensions can be very effective if done with a consistent, clear plan and by qualified staff members. Even with an effective in-school suspension plan, other standard procedures should be in place like counseling to truly address the root of the problem and make lasting change of behaviors.

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**APPENDIX A: SEVEN STANDARDS OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
AND ALIGNMENT WITH LEGISLATION**

Created by NCDPI, aligns the seven standards with legislation adopted and approved in 1999.

#	Standard	Component	General Statute
1	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction	<i>Establish the program's mission, goals, and expected outcomes</i>	115C12(24)
2	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Identify the target population</i>	115C12(24)
3	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Develop process for assigning and enrolling students into the alternative program</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48 (b) 115C-397.1
4	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Access to the documentation used to establish the need for the assignment</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48(b)
5	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Provide the steps in the appeals process to the parent</i>	115C12(24)
6	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Identify the documents to be transferred to the alternative program;</i>	115C12(24)
7	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Indicate how students are transported to the program</i>	115C12(24)
8	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Curriculum & Instruction	<i>Describe the curricular, instructional day, and courses to be offered</i>	115C12(24)
9	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Ensure a safe, orderly, caring, and inviting environment</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48(b)
10	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Primarily provide choice in enrollment</i>	115C12(24)

11	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Provide for active parent/guardian participation in the assignment decision</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48 (3)(b)
12	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Include least one representative to participate in the assignment decision for enrollment</i>	115C12(24)
13	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Access to and utilize information from the referring entity that identifies previous interventions, strategies, or actions taken</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48 (b)
14	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Access to student information data prior to the arrival of the student</i>	115C12(24)
15	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Implement effective preparation and plans to increase positive student outcomes</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48(b)
16	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Effective in-take procedures that address the preparation and plans for the student</i>	115C12(24)
17	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Effective transition procedures that address the preparation and plans for the student</i>	115C12(24)
18	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Strongly encourage the participation of parents in the enrollment and transition phases</i>	115C12(24)
19	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development	<i>Highly qualified and effective faculty and staff</i>	115C-47(32a) 115C-105.47(a)
20	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Sufficient faculty and staff to carry-out the mission of the program</i>	115C-47(32a)
21	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Small student to teacher ratio, 10:1 or smaller, but not more than 15:1</i>	ALP Policy & Procedures Document for Grades K- 12

			Adopted September 2003
22	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Minimal disparity in the percent of exceptional children in comparison to the district</i>	ALP Policy & Procedures Document for Grades K-12 Adopted September 2003
23	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development	<i>Ensure that special education and related services for students with disabilities are provided according to the student's individualized education program</i>	IDEA 115C-113
24	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Encouraged to have teacher assistants in classes with more than ten students</i>	115C12(24)
25	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate	<i>Encouraged to have teacher assistants assigned to all courses that have EOGs/EOCs, or other competency-based tests that are required by the State for promotion or graduation</i>	115C12(24)
26	Clear Mission Leadership Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Use the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as the primary framework for instruction</i>	115C12(24)
27	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction	<i>Flexibility in implementing strategies and methods that positively impact the delivery of curriculum and instruction, and student growth and development</i>	115C12(24)
28	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction	<i>Supplement the curriculum and instruction with life skills, character education, conflict management, and career preparation</i>	115C12(24) 115C-105.48(b)
29	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Positive and effective whole school systems for student management</i>	115C12(24)
30	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Curriculum & Instruction	<i>Learning environments that promote high expectations and encourages learning</i>	115C12(24) 115C-47(32a)
31	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development	<i>Access to continuous growth and development opportunities for faculty and staff</i>	115C12(24) 115C-47(32a)
32	Clear Mission	<i>Provide staff, parents, and students with</i>	115C12(24)

	Leadership Culture & Climate Parent/Community Involvement	<i>copies of the handbook that includes the policies, procedures, and standards of the school or program</i>	
33	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Cultivate a collaborative and supportive relationship with referring agencies and encourage them to maintain a demonstrated investment in the success of the students and the program</i>	115C12(24)
34	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Cultivate a collaborative and supportive relationship with parents that enhance the success of the students and the program</i>	115C-105.48(3b)
35	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Parent/Community Involvement	<i>Cultivate a collaborative and supportive relationship with the community that enhances the success of the students and the program</i>	115C12(24)
36	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Evaluate their programs and procedures to ensure the on-going effectiveness of the program and success of the students</i>	115C12(24)
37	Clear Mission Leadership Culture & Climate Professional Development Parent/Community Involvement Curriculum & Instruction Monitoring & Assessment	<i>Evaluate the effectiveness of their programs based on: the mission and goals; school/program improvement plan; school/program safety/crisis plan; needs assessment; parent, student, staff surveys; assessment of student outcomes; assessment of program outcomes; and, ABC's Accountability Model for Alternative Schools</i>	115C12(24) 115C-47(32a)

APPENDIX B: NCDPI DROPOUT DEFINITION

NCDPI (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/dropoutmanual.pdf>) definition of dropout for the purposes of data collection and reporting by local education agencies.

Dropout Definition

Event rates measure the proportion of students who drop out in a single reporting year.

The method used in North Carolina to count dropouts is called an event count. It counts the number of dropouts during a school year, beginning on the first day of the academic year and ending on the last day of the subsequent summer vacation.

All school systems and schools in North Carolina are to use the following definition for a dropout. To ensure accuracy and consistency in reporting dropouts, dropout prevention coordinators should become thoroughly familiar with the definition and its interpretations based on state laws and policies.

Note: Throughout this manual, "current year" refers to the 2013-14 school year, and "reporting year" refers to the 2012-13 school year.

Definition

A "dropout" is an individual who

- was enrolled in school at some time during the reporting year;
- was not enrolled on day 20 of the current year;
- has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved educational program; and does not meet any of the following reporting exclusions:
 1. transferred to another public school district, private school, home school or state/district approved educational program (not including programs at community colleges),
 2. temporarily absent due to suspension or school approved illness, or
 3. death.

The private school and home school exclusions apply to students transferring to schools registered with the NC Department of Non-Public Education. See page 4 for details on the home school exclusion.

APPENDIX C: NCDPI DROPOUT RATE CALCULATION

NCDPI (Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/dropout/reports/dropoutmanual.pdf>) method for calculating the dropout rate.

Calculating the Dropout Rate

For its annual report the DPI calculates dropout rates for grades 1-13, 7-13, and 9-13. The calculation for North Carolina's dropout rate has been greatly simplified. The 9-13 rate is calculated as follows.

STEP 1: Include all cases of reported dropouts (grades 9-13) in the numerator.

STEP 2: To determine the denominator,

- include the twentieth day membership for the reporting (previous) year;
- add the number of reported dropouts (same as used in the numerator).

STEP 3: Calculate a rate by dividing the numerator by the denominator; round off to the nearest one hundredth for a grade 9-13 dropout rate.

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Dropouts}}{\text{20th Day Membership (reporting yr.)} + \text{Total Number of Dropouts}}$$

Example

School System A documented 200 grade 9-13 dropouts for the reporting year 2012-13. The first month membership for the reporting year was 5,000 students in grades 9-13.

To compute the rate, state the fraction:

$$\text{Numerator} = 200$$

$$\text{Denominator} = 5,000 + 200 = 5,200$$

Solve: Divide the Numerator by the Denominator:

$$200 / 5,200 = 3.846\%, \text{ or rounded to nearest one hundredth, } \mathbf{3.85\%}.$$

**APPENDIX D: ARTICLE 8C LOCAL PLANS FOR ALTERNATIVE
SCHOOLS/ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS**

Article 8C. Local Plans For Alternative Schools/Alternative Learning Programs and Maintaining Safe and Orderly Schools.

Article 8C.

Local Plans For Alternative Schools/Alternative Learning Programs and Maintaining Safe and Orderly Schools.

§ 115C-105.45. Legislative findings.

The General Assembly finds that all schools should be safe, secure, and orderly. If students are to aim for academic excellence, it is imperative that there is a climate of respect in every school and that every school is free of disruption, drugs, violence, and weapons. All schools must have plans, policies, and procedures for dealing with disorderly and disruptive behavior.

All schools and school units must have effective measures for assisting students who are at-risk of academic failure or of engaging in disruptive and disorderly behavior. (1997-443, s. 8.29(r)(1).)

§ 115C-105.46. State Board of Education responsibilities.

In order to implement this Article, the State Board of Education:

- (1) through (4) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-145, s. 7.13(y), effective July 1, 2011.
- (5) Shall adopt policies that define who is an at-risk student. (1997-443, s. 8.29(r)(1); 1999-397, s. 2; 2000-140, s. 22; 2011-145, s. 7.13(y).)

§ 115C-105.47: Repealed by Session Laws 2011-145, s. 7.13(z), effective July 1, 2011.

§ 115C-105.47A. Proposals to establish alternative learning programs or alternative schools.

(a) Before establishing any alternative learning program or alternative school, the local board of education shall develop a proposal to implement the program or school that includes all of the following:

- (1) The educational and behavioral goals for students assigned to the program or school.
- (2) The policies and procedures for the operation of the program or school based on the State Board's standards adopted under G.S. 115C-12(24). The policies and procedures shall address the assignment of students to the program or school.
- (3) Identified strategies that will be used to improve student achievement and behavior.
- (4) Documentation that similar programs and schools in or out of the State, or both, have demonstrated success in improving the academic achievement and behavior of students assigned to them.
- (5) The estimated actual cost of operating the program or school. To the extent practicable, this shall include the cost of:
 - a. Staffing the program or school with teachers who have at least four years' teaching experience and who have received an overall rating of at least above standard on a formal evaluation and are certified in the areas and grade levels being taught;
 - b. Providing optimum learning environments, resources and materials, and high quality, ongoing professional development that will ensure students who are placed in the program or school are provided enhanced educational opportunities in order to achieve their full potential;
 - c. Providing support personnel, including school counselors, psychiatrists, clinical

psychologists, social workers, nurses, and other professionals to help students and their families work out complex issues and problems;

d. Maintaining safe and orderly learning environments; and

e. Providing transitional supports for students exiting the program or school and re-entering the referring school.

(6) Documented support of school personnel and the community for the implementation of the program or school.

(b) After the local board completes the proposal under subsection (a) of this section, the board shall submit the proposal to the State Board of Education for its review. The State Board shall review the proposal expeditiously and, if appropriate, may offer recommendations to modify the proposal. The local board shall consider any recommendations made by the State Board before implementing the alternative learning program or alternative school. (2005-446, s. 2.)

§ 115C-105.48. Placement of students in alternative schools/alternative learning programs.

(a) Prior to referring a student to an alternative school or an alternative learning program, the referring school shall:

(1) Document the procedures that were used to identify the student as being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly.

(2) Provide the reasons for referring the student to an alternative school or an alternative learning program.

(3) Provide to the alternative school or alternative learning program all relevant student records, including anecdotal information.

(b) When a student is placed in an alternative school or an alternative learning program, the appropriate staff of the alternative school or alternative learning program shall meet to review the records forwarded by the referring school and to determine what support services and intervention strategies are recommended for the student. The parents shall be encouraged to provide input regarding the students' needs. (1999-397, s. 2.)

§§ 115C-105.49 through 115C-105.52. Reserved for future codification purposes.

APPENDIX E: BOARD POLICIES FOR DISTRICT IN SOUTHEASTERN NC

Detailed chart of discipline related policies for the county in rural North Carolina.

County Board Policies	Summary of Policies
<p><u>Policy Code: 1510/4200/7270</u> <u>School Safety</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>Safe schools are necessary to evoke positive change academically and socially with ALL students. Schools will enforce and implement the necessary precautions to maintain safety within the school for learning to take place.</p> <p>Safety measures must be in place and honored throughout the school day to establish an effective school climate. Supervision of visitors, safety of school buildings and grounds, processes to address potential safety concerns and emergencies(school rules, training for staff and faculty, safety equipment, suspicious behavior, registered sex offenders and student behavior standards) are all measures that should be addressed in safe schools plan.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 1710/4021/7230</u> <u>Prohibition Against</u> <u>Discrimination, Harassment</u> <u>and Bullying</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>The board does not recognize or allow discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age and will provide equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups as required by law. Furthermore, the board does not permit any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying in any of its educational or employment activities or programs.</p> <p>Prohibited Behaviors and Consequences:</p> <p>1. Discrimination: any act or failure to act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, age or disability--intentional or unintentional</p> <p>Harassment and Bullying: any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or b. creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits <p>“Hostile environment” means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as harassment or bullying and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a</p>

	<p>reasonable person would agree that it is harassment or bullying. A hostile environment may be created through pervasive or persistent misbehavior or a single incident, if sufficiently severe.</p> <p>Harassment may include sexual or gender-based harassment that can happen between co-workers, fellow students, supervisors and subordinates, employees and students and between non-employees, including visitors, and employees or students.</p> <p>2. Retaliation: not permitted for reporting or intending to report a violation against the established policy. If it is determined that retaliation has taken place the appropriate consequences will be put in place by superintendent.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4300 Student Behavior Policies</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>Student Behavior policies are created to ensure a caring, safe and supportive environment within schools to provide opportunities for students to obtain and understand educational goals and objectives. Furthermore, the behavior policies establish an expectation of behavior, principles designed for these expectations and consequences for a undesired behavior.</p> <p>Students must comply with the Student Code of Conduct as it relates to minor and major behavioral challenges that occur within the school system. The code of conduct applies to the following situations/areas: while in any school building or on any school premises before, during or after school hours; while on any bus or other vehicles as part of any school activity; while waiting at any school bus stop; during any school-sponsored activity or extracurricular activity; when subject to the authority of school employees; and at any place or time when the students' behavior has or is reasonably expected to have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the schools or the safety of individuals in the school environment.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4300B Student Code of Conduct</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast,NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>In order to accomplish the task of providing academics to all student and improving student achievement the board has incorporated a Student Code of Conduct to ensure a safe and orderly environment in every school. The Code of Conduct serves as a guide for all stakeholders as a standard of appropriate student behaviors and expectations during school and at all school related activities.</p>

Policy Code: 4302 School
Plan for Management of
Student Behavior

Citation: NCSBA
Legal/Policy Services
policy.microscribepub.com--
school district in Southeast
NC, Board of Education
Policy Manual, 2013

School Plan for Management of Student Behavior must exist in all schools and it must contain effective strategies and policies to address behavioral issues that may arise. Local Education Agencies are encouraged to incorporate a program(s) that address positive behavior support and to continue to seek additional support measures to address and manage student behavior.

Components of the Plan:

1. Process by which student behavior will be addressed, including any use of a disciplinary committee and the means by which students at-risk of repeated disruptive or disorderly conduct are identified, assessed and assisted;
2. positive behavioral interventions and possible consequences that will be used; and
3. parental involvement strategies that address when parents or guardians will be notified or involved in issues related to their child's behavior.

This plan should not address the use of corporal punishment, which is identified as intentional infliction of physical pain upon the body of a student as a disciplinary measure. The policy states that corporal punishment includes but is not limited to, spanking, paddling and slapping. The use of corporal punishment is not permitted or allowed in any district. The board expects other measures to be used in place of corporal punishment because the board believes other consequences are more appropriate and effective to address behavior expectations.

Policy Code: 4315
Disruptive/Disrespectful
Behavior

Citation: NCSBA
Legal/Policy Services
policy.microscribepub.com--
school district in Southeast
NC, Board of Education
Policy Manual, 2013

A safe, orderly and inviting school environment is essential for teaching and learning to take place within each school. Teachers, staff and students play an integral part in the establishment and maintaining of a safe and inviting environment where free speech is enforced and may be limited based on time, place and manner in an effort to maintain an environment that allows for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Students are not permitted to disrupt or disrespect the learning environment, school activities to include extracurricular activities. The following provides an explanation of disruptive behavior:

1. intentional verbal or physical acts that result or have the potential to result in blocking access to school functions or facilities or preventing the convening or continuation of school-related functions;
2. appearance or clothing that (1) violates a reasonable dress code adopted and published by the school; (2) is substantially disruptive; (3) is provocative or obscene; or (4) endangers the health or safety of the student or others
3. possessing or distributing literature or illustrations that significantly disrupt the educational process or that are obscene or unlawful;
4. engaging in behavior that is immoral, indecent, lewd, disreputable or of any overly sexual nature in the school setting;
5. failing to observe establish safety rules, standards and regulations, including on buses and in hallways; and
6. interfering with the operation of school buses, including delaying the bus schedule, getting off at an unauthorized stop, and willfully trespassing upon a school bus.
7. Students shall not use racial epithets or obscene or vulgar language or gestures or otherwise show marked disrespect to a student, teacher, or other school employee.
8. Students shall comply with school regulations and with directions of teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, teacher aides, principals or other authorized school personnel during any period of time when they are properly under the authority of such school personnel.

Consequences:

K-5 Code of Student Conduct

1st Offense: Warning/Parent Conference

2nd Offense: Up To 3 Days OSS

3rd Offense: Up To 10 Days OSS

6-12 Code of Student Conduct

1st Offense: Warning/Up to 3 Days

2nd Offense: Up To 5 Days OSS

3rd Offense: Up To 10 Days OSS/Possible ALA/LTS

<p><u>Policy Code: 4320 Tobacco Products – Students</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>In a continuing effort to support a safe, caring, inviting and clean schools for faculty, student, staff the board supports the state law that denies the sale of tobacco products to minors and the use of tobacco products by minors. This law extends to school buildings, campuses and any other area identified as school property. The policy defines the term “tobacco product” as any product that contains or that is made or derived from tobacco and is intended for human consumption, including electronic cigarettes and all lighted and smokeless tobacco products.</p> <p>K-5 Code of Student Conduct</p> <p>1st Offense: Warning/Parent Conference/Tobacco Awareness 2nd Offense: Warning/Up to 1 Day ISS/OSS/Tobacco Awareness 3rd Offense: Up to 3 Days ISS/OSS</p> <p>6-12 Code of Student Conduct 1st Offense: Warning/Parent Conference/Up to 1 Day ISS/Tobacco Awareness 2nd Offense: Warning/Up to 3 Days ISS/OSS/Tobacco Awareness 3rd Offense: Up to 5 Days ISS/OSS</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4328 Gang-Related Activity</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>As part of the safety initiative within the district, gang activity is not permitted or prohibited. Gang activity distracts and takes away from the mission and vision of the district to ensure that All students are academically successful.</p> <p>A gang is identified by board policy as any group or organization made up of three or more people in a formal or informal way that is involved in any type of criminal activity. This group is easily identified by colors, signs and/or gesture for affiliation purposes.</p> <p>The following activities have been identified as gang related activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. soliciting others to become part of gang

	<p>2. committing, possessing, distributing, displaying or selling any clothes 3. tagging or defacing school property 4. requirement of payment for protection and/or insurance 5. inciting others to intimidate or to act with physical violence</p> <p>The gang-related activity policy is a non-discriminatory policy that follows the Code of Conduct based on the following consequences:</p> <p>K-5 1st Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS 2nd Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS 3rd Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS</p> <p>6-12 1st Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS/LTS 2nd Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS/LTS 3rd Offense= Up to 10 Days of OSS/LTS</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4341 Parental Involvement in Student Behavior Issues</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>Parental involvement is essential for appropriate teaching, learning and behavior to take place consistently and appropriately in school environment. School employees seek assistance and support from parents for all stakeholders to understand the expected behavior and the appropriate understanding of Code of Conduct in an effort to have a inviting and safe school culture.</p> <p>Faculty and Staff will implement effective strategies to support the Behavior Management Plan soliciting help and support from parents. Part of this process is to invite parents to conferences involving their students as it pertains to inappropriate conduct outlined in Student Code of Conduct, school standards and/or school rules.</p> <p>If administration decides to implement a short-term suspension, the principal shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. notify the parent in accordance with policy 44351, 'Short-Term Suspension' 2. maintain documents and relevant information that he or

	<p>she receives about the misbehavior for review with the parent, taking into account the rights of other students or staff that may be involved;</p> <p>3. make reasonable efforts, if appropriate, to meet with the parent before or at the time the student returns to school after any suspension; and</p> <p>4. make available a copy of this policy, the Code of Student Conduct, and all other applicable board policies, school standards and school rules.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4351 Short-Term Suspension</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>A short term suspension is an out of school suspension for up to 10 days. The policy does not permit a short-term suspension to include: (1) the removal of a student from class by the classroom teacher, the principal or other authorized school personnel for the remainder of the subject period or for less than one-half of the school day or (2) the changing of a student’s location to another room or place on the school premises. Any student given short-term suspension is not allowed to be on school premises or to attend any extracurricular activity without prior approval of the building principal.</p> <p>Pre-Suspension Rights of the Student</p> <p>1. Student must be provided with an informal hearing with principal prior to receiving short-term suspension. Administration may hold the meeting after giving student oral or written information about charges. The student and parent are part of the hearing process and will hear all information to include statements in regards to the charges the student received.</p> <p>If a student poses a threat to the safety and order of school environment or disrupts the school environment the principal may impose short-term suspension prior to administration of hearing.</p> <p>Students Rights During Suspension</p> <p>1. the opportunity to take textbooks home for the duration of the suspension</p> <p>2. upon request, the right to receive all missed assignments and, to the extent practicable, the materials distributed to students in connection with such assignments; and</p> <p>3. the opportunity to take any quarterly, semester or grading period examinations missed during the suspension</p>

	<p>period</p> <p>Parents should receive documentation that identifies reason for suspension and a description of charges in which suspension was imposed.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4352 Removal of Student During the Day</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual 2013,</p>	<p>The principal has the authority to remove a student from school grounds that has been suspended under the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the parent has been notified and is able to make arrangements for the student to leave the school or agrees to the student's using public transportation or driving himself or herself home; 2. the parent has been notified and is available to receive student, and the principal is able to arrange for transportation from the school to home; or 3. the principal involves law enforcement in the removal of the student from school grounds because such action is necessary to provide a safe, orderly school environment <p>If these conditions are not existent the suspension will begin the next school day.</p>
<p><u>Policy Code: 4353 Long-Term Suspension, 365-Day Suspension, Expulsion</u></p> <p>Citation: NCSBA Legal/Policy Services policy.microscribepub.com-- school district in Southeast NC, Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013</p>	<p>Long-term suspension, 365 Day suspension, and expulsion practices will be followed in correspondence with Policy 4353. These actions include the right to written notice of the suggested discipline and the right to recourse via a full hearing prior to imposing disciplinary action.</p> <p>A principal may suggest to the Superintendent the long-term suspension of any student who voluntarily takes part in conduct that violates a provision of the Student Code of Conduct that authorizes long-term suspension. Only the Superintendent or his/her designee has the authority to long-term suspend a student.</p> <p>Determination of Appropriate Consequences based on principal recommendation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Culpability of Student- In assessing the culpability of the student for his or her behavior, the principal may consider criteria such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. student's age; 2. the student's ability to form the intent to cause the

harm that occurred or could have occurred; and

3. evidence of the student's intent when engaging in the conduct

b. Dangerousness of the Student- In assessing the dangerousness of the student, the principal may consider criteria such as:

1. the student's disciplinary or criminal record relate to anti-social behavior or drugs and alcohol;

2. whether a weapon was involved in the incident and if a weapon was involved, whether the student had the ability to inflict serious injury or death with weapon;

3. evidence of the student's ability to cause the harm that was intended or that occurred; and

4. whether the student is subject to policy 4260, Student Sex Offenders

c. Harm Caused by the Student-In assessing the severity of the harm caused by the student, the principal may consider criteria such as whether any of the following occurred;

1. someone was physically injured or killed;

2. someone was directly threatened or property was extorted through the use of a weapon

3. someone was directly harmed; either emotionally or psychologically;

4. educational property or others' personal property was damaged; or

5. students, school employees or parents were aware of the presence of a weapon or of dangerous behavior on the part of the perpetrator.

After the principal makes recommendation in regards to long-term suspension, 365-day suspension or expulsion to the superintendent a parent/guardian should receive notification of this recommendation. The following items must be documented in this notice:

1. the notice type, i.e., notice of long-term suspension

2. a description of the incident and the student's conduct that led to the recommendation;

3. the specific provision(s) of the Code of Student Conduct that the student allegedly violated;

4. the specific process by which the parent may request a hearing to contest the decision and the deadline for making the request;

5. the process by which the hearing will be held, including all due process rights to be accorded the student during the

	<p>hearing;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. notice of the right to retain an attorney to represent the student in the hearing process;7. notice that an advocate, instead of an attorney, may accompany the student to assist in the presentation of the appeal;8. notice that an advocate, instead of an attorney, may accompany the student to assist in the presentation of the appeal;9. notice of the right to review and obtain copies of the student's educational records prior to the hearing;10. a reference to policy 4345, Student Discipline Records, regarding the expungement of disciplinary records; and11. the identity and phone number of a school employee whom the parent may call to obtain assistance in receiving a Spanish translation of the English language information included in the document.
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APPENDIX F: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: [Sandra Arteaga](#)

CC: [Bill Grobe](#)

Date: 7/9/2014

[UMCIRB 14-001001](#)

Re: Identifying an Appropriate Structure for Non-Traditional Learners: The Impact of Suspensions on Non-Traditional Learners

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 7/9/2014 to 7/8/2015. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval **includes the following items:**

Name

Approval Letter to SCS Superintendent.pdf

Assent-Template-12-17-years-of-age 06.20.14.doc

Chapters 1-3 Dissertation Submission

Data Collection Sheets.pdf

Interview Questions for Administration.pdf

Interview Questions for Community Members (1).pdf

Letter to Expert Panel for Surveys.pdf

Letter-to-Adult Participants 6.19.14.doc

Letter-to-Parents and Students 6.19.14.doc

Proposal Powerpoint-Arteaga.pptx

Scotland Letter of Support.pdf

Shaw Academy Faculty Survey.pdf

Shaw Academy Parent_Guardian Survey.pdf

Shaw Academy Student Survey.pdf

Survey-Consent-Letter-Template-for-Expedited-Research-06.19.14.doc

Update Letter to SCS Superintendent 12.04.13.pdf

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

Description

Recruitment Documents/Scripts

Consent Forms

Study Protocol or Grant Application

Data Collection Sheet

Interview/Focus Group

Scripts/Questions

Interview/Focus Group

Scripts/Questions

Recruitment Documents/Scripts

Consent Forms

Consent Forms

Study Protocol or Grant Application

Recruitment Documents/Scripts

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and Questionnaires

Consent Forms

Recruitment Documents/Scripts

APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD TITLE CHANGE APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Amendment Approval

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Sandra Arteaga](#)
CC: [Bill Grobe](#)
Date: 4/15/2015
[Ame1_UMCIRB_14-001001](#)
[UMCIRB_14-001001](#)
Re: Identifying an Appropriate Structure for Non-Traditional Learners: The Impact of Suspensions on Non-Traditional Learners

Your Amendment has been reviewed and approved using expedited review for the period of 4/15/2015 to 7/8/2015 . It was the determination of the UMCIRB Chairperson (or designee) that this revision does not impact the overall risk/benefit ratio of the study and is appropriate for the population and procedures proposed.

Please note that any further changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. A continuing or final review must be submitted to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Document	Description
Arteaga-Dissertation (0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application

Thesis committee has recommended a change in study title

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418

IRB000003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

