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Teachers' Perceptions of the In-School Suspension Program at Centerville High School

Joshua Vaccar
Cedarville University

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION
AT CENTERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Education

By

JOSHUA ADAM VACCAR
M. Ed., Cedarville University 2010

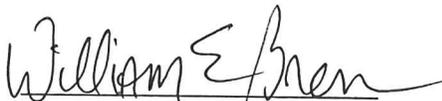
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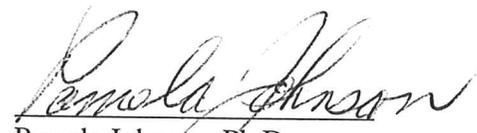
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY
SUPERVISION BY Joshua Adam Vaccar ENTITLED Teacher Perceptions of the ISS
Program at Centerville High School BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Education.


William Brown, Ph.D.
President


Thomas Cornman, Ph.D.
Academic Vice President


Stephen Gruber, Ed.D.
Coordinator, Masters of
Education Degree Program


Pamela Johnson, Ph.D.
Dean of Social Sciences and
Human Performance

ABSTRACT

Vaccar, Joshua A. M.Ed., Education Department, Cedarville University, 2010. *Teachers' perceptions of the ISS program at Centerville High School.*

This qualitative study provides teacher perceptions of the in-school suspension (ISS) program at Centerville High School. The study was based on semi-structured interviews of fifteen individuals, representing a sample of teachers in the math and science departments. Interview questions focused on three constructs: benefits, limitations, and suggestions for improvement. Overall, the results show that the teachers have found the ISS program to be an effective and necessary tool to help with classroom management. However, teachers have also reported areas of concern, such as, efficiency and functionality of the program. Other benefits, limitations and areas for improvement were also noted. These results can be used to inform other schools on the effects of the ISS program at their facility.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
Definition of Terms.....	5
Statement of Problem or Issue.....	6
Scope of Study and Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	9
Methods of Procedure.....	10
CHAPTER II: Plenary Literature Review.....	11
Schools of Thought.....	12
Benefits of Discipline.....	21
Summary.....	24
CHAPTER III: Methodology.....	25
Rationale for Method.....	26
Population of Study.....	26
Sample	26
Procedure.....	27
CHAPTER IV: Qualitative Findings.....	30

Description of Data.....	31
Benefits of the ISS Program.....	32
Limitations.....	36
Improvements.....	38
Summary.....	42
CHAPTER V: Discussion and Implications.....	42
Interpretation of the Results.....	43
Potential Applications of the Findings.....	45
Biblical Integration.....	46
Discipline versus Punishment.....	48
Relation of the Results to Literature.....	49
Strengths of the Study.....	51
Limitations of the Study.....	51
Suggestions for Future Research.....	52
APPENDICES Interview Questions & Survey Questions.....	53
FIGURES.....	58
REFERENCES.....	59

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educators have been seeking out solutions for behavioral issues within the classroom since the days of the one-room schoolhouse (Morris & Howard, 2003). The topic of classroom management has been an ongoing discussion among teachers, all trying to define the ideal classroom environment. Though the majority of students come to school to learn, it only takes a few troublesome students to ruin that opportunity. The educational process can easily be spoiled by disruptions, such as tardiness, talking out of turn, disrespecting the teacher and other students (“A Call to Order,” 2008).

Traditionally, students engaging in disruptive behavior have been kept after school, paddled, or suspended from school. Though these methods have been used for quite some time, they are found to be somewhat ineffective for a number of reasons. Students that are kept after school have run into transportation issues. Most schools have removed the use of corporal punishment from their repertoire of disciplinary actions. And finally, out-of-school suspensions seem to be an irrational solution, especially for students held responsible for truancy (Morris & Howard, 2003).

As loosely as out-of-school suspensions have been allocated, they do have their place in a school’s collection of disciplinary actions. For example, any real or perceived immediate threats to a student’s own safety or the safety of others is a logical cause for a student to be placed on an out-of-school suspension. School violence includes unacceptable social behavior ranging from aggression that threatens or harms others (and the highly publicized acts of mass bloodshed) to bullying, threats (Hoang, 2001), sexual harassment, gang violence, extortion, and other forms of intimidation (McEvoy, 1999).

The Gun-Free Schools Act (Pub L No. 103-882) of 1994 requires schools to expel, for a period of not less than one year, students who have brought a weapon to school (Taras, Frankowski, McGrath, Mears, & Murray, 2003). The Legislative Analyst's Office, State of California (1995) has shown that weapons and immediate threats are not the major grounds for which schools are administering out-of-school suspensions. In 1997, of the 3.1 million students suspended from school, most students were involved in nonviolent and noncriminal acts. Possession of weapons accounted for only 10% of the expulsions and suspensions (Brooks et al., 2000). In the small towns of states such as Oregon and South Carolina, students tend to be expelled at a rate 5 to 6 times than that of students in large cities like Chicago and San Francisco, yet it is unlikely that crime rates in small towns are 5 times the rates of those in large metropolitan areas (Brooks et al., 2000).

Though originally set up to protect the safety of an educational environment, out-of-school suspension is sometimes imposed as a disciplinary approach. Its initial intent was to punish the student and then to discourage the other students from following the same behavior. The thought was that removing the student from the current situation and the school would provide a cooling-off period for the student, also giving the frustrated teachers and administrators a break. Also, removing the student from school would send a message home to the parents, who may have considered disorderly conduct to be purely the school's responsibility (Taras et al., 2003). Other school officials willingly admit to using expulsion and out-of-school suspension programs to remove troublesome students from the setting (Bowditch, 1993).

Since the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act (1994), federal policy has adopted a zero-tolerance approach for firearms, mandating a 1-year expulsion for their possession

on school grounds (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Some school districts have extended zero tolerance even further to fighting (Petrillo, 1997), homework completion (McFeely, 1998), or even off-campus behavior (Seymour, 1999). Between 79% and 94% of all schools hold a zero-tolerance policy that gives predetermined consequences to various student offenses, (“Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools”, 1998) and almost 90% of Americans support these policies (Rose & Gallup, 1998). The U.S. Customs Agency developed zero-tolerance in the 1980s to target the booming drug trade (Henault, 2001). This policy was introduced to school systems with the Clinton Administration’s passing of PL 103-382, the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA, 1998). This law marked the first time that state legislation began to intervene in the local control that school administrators traditionally had over disciplining its students (Pipho, 1998). In addition, the law does not require school administrators to provide access to continued education through alternative schooling for expelled students (Dunbar & Villarule, 2002). With the growing concern regarding school safety and the ongoing battle with student behavior, out-of-school suspension has become a norm despite its irrationality.

With ongoing efforts from teachers, parents, and administrators to deliver proper correction and disciplinary action, more and more schools have turned to in-school suspension programs. In-school suspension is “a program to which a student is assigned because of disruptive behavior for a specific amount of time” (Sheets 1996). Advantages to in-school suspension come from both academic and practical perspectives. Students who are placed in in-school suspension will need to be in a supervised area where they will be required to continue their school work, and thus less likely to fall behind. Students placed in in-school suspension will not have the opportunity to be a disruption in the

classroom, while others can be assured an environment conducive to learning (Nielsen, 1979).

Other advantages may also accrue by requiring the attendance of troublesome students. If the programs require completion of academic assignments, this will help students continue in their high school education. If the in-school programs can help raise the graduation rates and decrease the high school dropout rate, the advantages could snowball. Benefits could include great tax savings (less welfare assistance and more income taxes from employed individuals), lower divorce rates, and decreased crime, all of which are associated with high school graduation (Southern Regional Council, 1973).

In-school suspension is a term that is used broadly across schools today. While one school might send a disruptive student to a vacant classroom for one period for a timeout, another school might have a student devote a whole day to the program while being required to complete a set of academic requirements. Some schools have even gone as far as setting up a counseling program within the in-school suspension program. However, in some states, no alternative educational setting is provided to suspended students. For example, in 1996-1997 in Massachusetts, 37% of expelled youth did not receive alternative education either in another school or in a special education program. In 75% of those cases, alternative education was not provided because the school district chose not to do so ("Student Exclusions in Massachusetts Public Schools," 1998).

To ensure the success of the in-school suspension program, teachers, administrators, and parents all need to be on the same page as they build the design for the layout of the program. Cooperation from other school personnel, counseling services for students who are released, and written disciplinary procedures are other ways to help

improve the program's success (Nielsen, 1979). It is vitally important that the teachers, counselors, principals, and students are well aware that the in-school suspension center is not simply a detention hall or a cure-all solution for every disciplinary problem.

Of course, when you involve as many people as you need to in order to carry out a successful in-school suspension program, there tends to be difficulties. One problem that results is too many students being assigned to in-school suspension at the same time; while another is the tardiness of the teachers in providing their students the daily academic assignments. Another issue that arises is that the number of days a student is assigned to in-school suspension does not increase the likelihood that a student's behavior will improve. Though a very important step in the process, it is likely administrators will bypass the process of notifying the parents of their child's behavior, thereby causing higher rates of truancy to occur (Nielsen, 1979).

In-school suspension finds its way into the school system as a compromise sanction meant to remove troublesome students from the classroom without denying them the right to come to school. They are not the students who distribute drugs in school or make bomb threats; for those infractions require the action of out-of-school suspension or expulsion. In-school suspension is the gray area between well-mannered students and students who are too dangerous to keep in the schools (Trojan, 2003). As important and meaningful as this program can be, designing and implementing one requires time, cooperation, and unity between teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators.

Definition of Terms

Classroom management: The orchestration of the learning environment of a group of individuals within a classroom setting (Evertson, 2003).

Detention: A form of punishment consisting of student confinement after school hours to a detention room to do prescribed work for a specific number of days proportionate with his or her offense (Hawes & Hawes, 1982).

Disruptive behavior: Behavior that interferes with the student's own learning and/or the educational process of others, and requires attention and assistance beyond that which traditional programs can provide or results in frequent conflicts of a disruptive nature while the student is under the jurisdiction of the school, either in or out of the classroom (Sheets, 1996).

Educator: A professional practitioner in the field of education usually engaged in either teaching or administration (Hawes & Hawes, 1982).

In-school suspension: A program to which a student is assigned because of disruptive behavior for a specific amount of time (Sheets, 1996).

Out-of-school suspension: A disciplinary sanction that requires the student to be excluded from the school building for specified period of time (Christle, Nelson & Jolivette, 2004).

Public school: In the United States, an elementary or secondary school operated as part of a public school system or district and supported by taxes to provide education to any child of eligible age and residence without charge (Hawes & Hawes, 1982).

Zero tolerance: The term given to a school or district policy that mandates predetermined consequences for various student offenses (Taras et al., 2003).

Statement of the Problem or Issue

Out-of-school suspension is one of the most common used forms of discipline in the public school today. Originally created as a disciplinary action for students who cause unsafe and threatening environments within the school, is now being used in response to

relatively minor offenses, such as disobedience and disrespect, attendance problems, and general disruptions (Skiba & Peterson 2000). More and more schools are noticing the damaging effects on students from placing them on out-of-school suspension for nonthreatening behavioral issues. Unfortunately, such measures have been found to be ineffective (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

At Centerville High School (CHS), in Centerville, Ohio, students could also be assigned a Saturday School for certain offenses. A Saturday School is to be served from 8am-11am on whichever Saturday the student is scheduled for by their administrator. If a student at any point in the year receives a third Saturday School, he or she was then placed on out-of-school suspension. Administrators were finding in several cases that whenever a student would receive a second Saturday School they would intentionally skip it so they would then be placed on out-of-school suspension and not have to serve their Saturday School. The common student perspective was they would rather not have to come to school during the week than to have to come to school an extra day on Saturday, regardless if they would not receive credit for their work. Centerville High School, becoming aware of these situations, began to discuss other alternatives.

A congressional committee suggests in-school suspension as one viable option for reducing school violence and vandalism (Bayh, 1978). Though in-school suspension has been around for many years now, there are still numerous schools that have not put, or who are just now putting, this program into practice, Centerville High School being one of them. In 2007, CHS launched their first in-school suspension program—a pilot program that was staffed by one teacher in one room in a school with just under 2800 students. The in-school suspension program was designed to keep students in school and

accountable for the academics that they would be missing. Centerville teachers were responsible for gathering student work and sending it down to the in-school suspension center prior to the student's first day served. Students whose work was not submitted by their teacher in a timely manner were expected to sit quietly and find something to do. Students were placed on in-school suspension anywhere from one to three days depending on the severity or the repetitiveness of the offense.

With the ISS program being so new at Centerville, the faculty and staff had many thoughts and suggestions about the program. With any new program or arrangement it is imperative to reflect and assess to see what improvements can be made. In order to evaluate this program, teachers' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of the ISS program at Centerville High School were researched. Assessing a specific group of teachers is needed since opinions across multiple subject areas may produce inconsistent results. My particular target audiences were the math and science teachers at the high school, all of whom had at least one of their students placed in ISS.

Scope of the Study and Delimitations

In this study I interviewed 19 teachers within the math and science departments at Centerville High School, an upper-middle class, suburban, public high school with an enrollment of approximately 2800 students. The student population consisted of 86% Caucasian, 6% Asian-Pacific Islander, 5% African American, 7% economically disadvantaged, and 9% diagnosed as having a disability. The study was conducted to collect data on teachers' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School. I also reviewed areas where teachers communicate the need for improvement. The teachers that were interviewed were from

the math and science departments. Each teacher had at least one student removed from their class and placed in ISS. Regarding the ISS, all teachers, including myself, were to attend a meeting to go over the procedures of how the ISS program was run. A follow-up memo was also received reiterating how the program was to function. Due to the scope of this study, the results can be rationally generalized to other in-school suspension programs within public high schools with demographics similar to the sample in this study.

This project focused solely on the math and science teachers' perceptions of the in-school suspension program. Student perceptions will not be taken into account. Also, departments outside of math and science were not included in the study.

Significance of the Study

It is indisputably obvious to see the growing problem of disruptive and violent behavior within the public school today (Vavrus & Cole, 2002). It is essential that teachers, administrators, and counselors find the most effective form of disciplinary action that fits the offense in order to deter students from continuing in their behaviors. Gathering data from teachers with first-hand experience in this study will help to ensure that everything is being done to successfully strengthen the in-school suspension program.

The perceived benefits of the ISS program must be explored. If teachers are unable to see the progress in student behavior, then the program's need may be questioned. On the other hand, if teachers are able to see improvement in student attitudes and behavior, then the program should be further promoted.

As with any benefit that comes with a program, there also come its limitations. It is essential to explore these. By doing this, schools will be able to take the proper steps to work around these obstacles. For example, based on the data from a number of diverse studies, it appears that school suspension is being used with increasing frequency, in a disproportionate manner relative to minorities, and for infractions that should be handled with less intensive disciplinary strategies (Mendez, 2003). The possible benefits must be weighed against the potential drawbacks. Potential limitations that are exposed by this study may be useful to other high schools of similar demographics.

It is not often that a piloted program looks the same the second year as it does the first year. Studies have shown that school suspensions often are not successful in decreasing students' chronic and inappropriate behavior, and that it is related to a variety of negative academic and educational outcomes for students. This study will help bring to the surface the components of the program that need to be improved to help make it be most effective.

Methods of Procedure

Research Questions:

1. How do math and science teachers perceive the benefits and limitations of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School?
2. In what areas do math and science teachers see needs for improvement of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School?

This action research project will study math and science teachers' perceptions of the new in-school suspension program at Centerville High School. The study will be measured in a qualitative manner. The data will be collected with open-ended questions

in the form of a semi-structured interview, as well as the use of questionnaires. When exploring the data I will seek to find perceived benefits and limitations amongst the teachers. I will also look through the data to see if there were any areas that mentioned the need for improvement. All interviews will be held in a central location within the high school with little or no distraction.

My sample will consist of math and science teachers who have taught for at least one full year at the high school. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted with duration of 10-15 minutes, where the questionnaires will be gathered electronically. When studying the data, I will look for widespread themes among my constructs. In analyzing the data, I underwent the process of coding where I looked for themes that the participants consistently supported. Next, I added any other codes that became apparent. This gave me a large list of codes. I then assessed the data for findings that repeated themselves among the teachers interviewed in the study. Themes were only included where a majority of the participants consistently supported the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: PLENARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Discipline is training which corrects, molds, or perfects, the mental ability or moral character. It is obedience to authority or rules, and punishment to correct poor behavior. Discipline is a necessary ingredient to any successful school (Eggleton, 2001) If schools take seriously the moral development of students, their discipline policies should be a conduit for moral instruction. Because discipline is central to a school's ethos, if rules and sanctions are perceived as irrational, trivial, unfair or arbitrary, then other school efforts to support a moral outlook are likely to be dismissed (Goodman, 2006).

Discipline in America's schools has been characterized as a major concern of the general public for at least three decades (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1998). Both teachers and administrators agree that discipline is the most serious problem faced by teachers today (Oliva & Pawlaw, 1997). Well disciplined schools do not happen by accident. A solid discipline plan requires unity between teachers, administrators, students and parents. An effective discipline plan should create an environment in which all students take responsibility for their own behavior, treat others with respect, and learn the value of productive work and good citizenship (Eggleton, 2001).

Parents play a vital role in student discipline. Parents who are involved in their child's daily school life have a better understanding of what is acceptable and expected in a school climate (Williams, 1998). After getting parents involved, the school must have a regular plan for enforcing school policies (McNaughton & Johns, 1991). When student misbehavior occurs, not only are the student's actions taken into account, but the causes are reviewed and addressed (Eggleton, 2001). It is important that students are reminded of the school's rules and regulations and associated behavioral consequences, not only at the start of the year, but throughout. Consistency must rule and positive behavior should be rewarded (Heller, 1996). Also, teamwork and mutual support must be established between the principal and the teachers to making a commitment to developing good discipline. Lastly, effective discipline requires ongoing, sustained evaluation (Williams, 1998). Strategies for reducing school discipline must be assessed continuously for their impact on school climate.

Schools of Thought

Corporal punishment. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries corporal punishment was a valued part of the educational process. In the early 1900s, the use of punishment in the “school economy” was intended as a positive, to “aim at helping the backslider to do willingly what he ought to do” (Nunn, 1920). Educational theorists had noted that in order for children to achieve success at school, it was necessary to motivate them and, at the same time, interest them in their work was a desirable way of achieving this, the threat of punishment worked just as well (Welton, 1911; Whitehead, 1955).

Corporal punishment is defined as "physical pain inflicted on the body of a child as a penalty for disapproved behavior" (NCACPS, 2009). Corporal punishment is intentional and includes a variety of methods, such as hitting, spanking, punching, shaking, paddling, shoving, and use of various objects, painful body postures, excessive exercise drills, and electric shock (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2003). Different schools provide different "tools" to administer corporal punishment, including paddles, leather straps, and switches. Injuries from corporal punishment may include (but are not limited to) welts, blood blisters, severe bruising, skin discolorations, hematomas, blood clots, and broken veins (Hyman, 1995).

Although corporal punishment has been banned in 29 states, more than a million cases of corporal punishment in U.S. schools continue to be reported annually, with states located in the southeastern and southwestern United States accounting for the vast majority of instances of corporal punishment (Dupper, 2008). Approximately 15,000 students request medical treatment each year following instances of corporal punishment (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2003). Oklahoma, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, and New Mexico find corporal punishment to be the second most

frequent form of discipline, whereas five states (Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, and Tennessee) account for almost three-quarters of all the instances of corporal punishment in the United States (Center for Effective Discipline, 2009).

While corporal punishment may temporarily suppress negative behavior, it does not teach a new behavior. Research says that the use of corporal punishment always negatively affects self-concept (Hyman, 1996). Cryan (1995) states that the psychological effects of corporal punishment may be as harmful as the physical effects. These psychological effects may include increased anxiety and fear, feelings of helplessness and humiliation, stifled relationships with others, and aggression and destruction at home and at school (Cryan, 1995). There is a parallel with schools with high rates of corporal punishments where they also have high rates of suspensions and are generally more punitive in all discipline responses than schools with low rates of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment in these schools is not used as a last resort, but is often the first line of disciplinary action for nonviolent and minor behaviors (Hyman, 1996).

Zero-Tolerance Policy. The emphasis in school discipline has shifted from a prevention and correction model to a reactive and punitive model in recent years (Bear, Cavalier & Manning, 2002; Cohn & Canter, 2004). Many schools now have initiated zero-tolerance policies to help reduce their discipline epidemic (Eggleton, 2001). Zero tolerance generally is defined as a school district policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishment for specific offenses, regardless of the circumstances, disciplinary history, or age of the student involved (Education Commission of the States, 2002). Virtually no data suggests that zero tolerance reduces school violence and some data suggests that certain strategies such as strip searches or undercover agents in school

may create emotional harm or encourage students to drop out (Eggleton, 2001). If we solely rely on zero-tolerance strategies, we are accepting a model of schooling that implicitly teaches students that the preservation of order demands the suspension of individual rights (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Morrison and D’Incau (1997) argue that student expulsion decisions are not often a result of the student behavior, but also come from the educational philosophy, policies, and practices of the particular school system. They assume that fewer students would be expelled if discipline practices were more flexible and student-centered. Fien (2002), in a U.S. Secret Service report on threat assessment in schools, states that flexible policies would give administrators a range of alternatives that would take into account the circumstances surrounding a situation would be more sensible. The report suggests that disciplinary actions should focus on the totality of behaviors, motives, and communications rather than relying on a single blanket policy. This would mean that teachers and administrators could step back and assess the level of threat and ask if the information supports any assumed punishment. This would allow a less severe punishment for students who present little, if any, threat. As teachers and administrators, we should do all we can to keep as many students as possible in school.

Out of School Suspension and Expulsion. [Out-of-school] suspension, the temporary denial of the privilege of attending school, is a corrective measure frequently used in schools today. Out-of-school suspension is one of the most common consequences for disciplinary infractions and is often used in response to relatively minor offenses, such as disobedience and disrespect, attendance problems, and general disruption (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Most educators would agree that the right to

suspend is a safety valve essential to maintaining order in schools, but they would also admit that it offers only a temporary solution because of the legal restrictions on the length of suspensions (Vanderslice, 1999). Proponents of out-of-school suspension suggest that it reduces the reoccurrence of misbehavior, improves parent involvement, and illuminates the seriousness of misbehavior (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). A related goal of OSS is to get the parent to pay attention to the fact that their child's misbehavior is serious and that parental involvement is necessary to deal with this misbehavior (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003). It is also disputed that other students in the class should not be hindered by the disruptive and potentially harmful behavior of a few students within the classroom environment (Garibaldi, 1979).

On the other hand, such measures have been found to be ineffective and may, in fact, have a negative impact upon the student, as they remove the youth from constructive learning environments (Sugai & Horner, 1999). Unfortunately, out-of-school suspensions are likely to increase discipline problems because of the frustrating effect of the returning student finding him or herself even further behind when he or she was evicted from school (Patterson, 1985). There is research to show that students who are suspended repeatedly are more likely to be suspended for less serious behavioral incidents than their peers (Skiba & Peterson, 1997). In addition, evidence also shows that students who are suspended repeatedly are more likely to drop out of school (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Recent studies show that suspension may predispose children to antisocial behavior and suicidal ideation (Sundius, Farneth, 2008).

Other research related to suspension concerns the fact that it does not accomplish the goals of education. Ambrose and Gibson (1995) found that in their own middle

school of approximately 500 students, out of 89 suspensions, 84 involved repeaters (students who were suspended at least once before). Fourteen were suspended twice, ten were suspended three times, four were suspended four times, and two were suspended five times in one school year. Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997) also found that the issues that placed students into suspension were not actions that were threats to safety, but instead, those that indicated noncompliance or disrespect. They also found little evidence of a consistent relationship between the seriousness of the offense and the severity of the consequence.

Clearly, severe acts of violence or illegal activity, such as possession of weapons, possession of drugs, or robbery should not be tolerated in the schools. Responding to these serious acts should be a high priority of school personnel and could be addressed through school removal (Evenson, Justinger, Pelischek, & Schulz, 2009). However, despite alarming suspension rates nationwide, which lead many to believe that violence in schools is on the rise, research demonstrates that about 90% of schools nationwide specify that no serious violent crimes were committed in a school year and that 99% of students do not commit serious crimes while in school (Bear, Cavalier & Manning, 2002; Cohn & Canter, 2004). This research validates the notion that suspensions are given for rather minor offenses. Removing students from school can be dangerous and unsafe. In fact, research shows that when students are removed from school, they seem to become more likely to engage in or become victims of violent crimes (Evenson et al., 2009). During the 2003-2004 school year the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education put together the following data: Rates of serious violent crimes against school-aged youth including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault are more than twice as

high outside of the school as they are inside of the school (Sundius & Farneth, 2008). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2003) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1994) state that youths who are not in school are more likely to have lower rates of academic achievement, to smoke, to use substances, to engage in sexual intercourse, to become involved in physical fights, to carry a weapon, and are far more likely to commit crimes and be incarcerated. With this type of data in mind, schools are doing students a disservice by removing them for minor infractions that are neither violent nor illegal (Evenson et al., 2009).

Finally, concerns have also been raised about the fairness of suspension referrals. Out-of-school suspension has also been criticized for reasons such as racial inequities and overrepresentation of students who are achieving below grade level (Morgan-D'Atrio, Northup, LaFleur, & Spera, 1995; Skiba & Peterson, 1997). Garibaldi's (1988) and Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997) studies reported inconsistent patterns in the administration of school discipline based on race, socio-economic status, gender, and disability. This situation is particularly problematic for African American and Latino children who tend to be suspended in disproportionate numbers for more discretionary offenses, such as "defiance of authority" and "disrespect of authority" (Civil Rights Project, 2000). Brooks et al., (2000) found African American and Latino students are suspended from school at 2.3 times the rate of white students.

In-School Suspension. Consequently, in-school suspension programs have been developed in response to criticism of out-of-school suspension (Chobot & Garibaldi, 1982; Garibaldi, 1995). With ongoing efforts from teachers, parents, and administrators to deliver proper correction and disciplinary action, more and more schools have turned

to this method of discipline. ISS has been incorporated into various school systems throughout the nation since the mid-seventies (Hockman & Worner, 1987; Patterson, 1985; Raebeck, 1993). Generally, in-school suspension precedes out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Students are normally placed in a room, required to work on regular assignments, and must adhere to a strict behavior code (Sheets, 1996).

Sheets (1996) believes that if a school wants a successful ISS program, it must include three essential components. The first component is a foundation component. In this element, a philosophy needs to be developed that coincides with the schools overall educational policies. The program should include a mission statement that states what the program is, where it wants to go, and how it will align with the school's discipline policy. The ISS policy development should be a shared responsibility among administrators, teachers, and the students. The rules must be firm, fair, consistently enforced, and reflect the overall mission statement of the program.

The next important aspect of the ISS program is the instructor. The instructor will make or break the ISS program. The person hired for this position should be a professional who is trained and evaluated. This individual must keep records, enforce policy, and perform many other duties. Adequate funding, appropriate environment, instructional materials, auxiliary staff, and the cooperation from the facility are also key aspects to the program (Sheets, 1996).

The final component of the program is evaluation. This must measure the change in student behavior over time and determine if the objectives of the program are being met. A committee should be formed to hold the evaluations. It will be their job to determine what changes need to be made within the program. For the ISS program to be

successful and fully effective, all of these three components must be present (Sheets, 1996).

Though in-school suspension programs are widely used across schools today, some schools run their program very differently than others. While one school might set aside a classroom where they are able to send disruptive students for one period for a time out, other schools might have a student dedicate a whole day sitting in a room being required to complete a set of academic requirements. Some schools have even gone as far as setting up counseling program within the in-school suspension program. Recent ISS programs include involvement and cooperation of all school personnel, including counselors. In addition, researchers strongly suggest that parental involvement is necessary for ISS to have the greatest chance to be effective (Knopf, 1991; Novell, 1994; Prior & Tulle, 1991)

Knopf's (1991) study found that only a few of all of the schools provided counseling interventions designed to help students improve their behaviors and attitudes toward school. Knopf goes on to say that when student misbehaviors are treated as the problem rather than a symptom of some deeper problem, the disciplinary measures fail more often than succeed because they do not make an effort to identify and remedy the cause(s) of the inappropriate behavior.

Hochman and Worner (1987) found that when students were placed in group counseling, they were able to reduce truancy, increase attendance, raise grade point average, and improve overall student behavior. In their late 1980s study, they discussed a program that they designed entitled *Beat It*. The purpose of this program was to reduce the repetitiveness and reoccurrence of students to ISS. The program helped students

learn how to take responsibility for their own actions and increase their self-esteem. Their findings showed that students who did not attend the program were 15 times more likely to be referred to the principal's office, 13 times more likely to return to ISS, and more likely to be suspended out of school. Overall, Hochman and Warner noticed that the attendance of their experimental group was significantly better and tardiness was less frequent.

Benefits of Discipline

Good discipline is one of the key characteristics of an effective school and is a necessary condition for effective teaching and learning to take place (Squelch, 2000). Sheets (1996) states that in-school suspension will satisfy three important criteria if executed correctly. It modifies student behavior. The assignments protect the overall learning environment by isolating disruptive students. Finally, in-school suspension protects the community by keeping the offending students off the streets.

Advantages to in-school suspension come from both academic and practical perspectives. Students who are placed in in-school suspension will need to be in a supervised area where they will be required to continue their school work, and be less likely to fall behind. Students placed in in-school suspension will not have the opportunities to be a disruption in the classroom, while others can be assured an environment conducive to learning (Nielsen, 1979). When schools are able to assign students in-school suspensions, as opposed to out-of-school they are protecting the community from vandalism inflicted by suspended students, improving public relations with employed parents who cannot supervise their children during the day, and enhancing

school finances through increases in average daily attendance compensation are obvious benefits (Nielson, 1979).

Other advantages may also accrue by requiring the attendance of troublesome students. If the programs require completion of academic assignments this will help students continue in their high school education. If the in-school programs can help raise the graduation rates and decrease the high school drop-out rate, the advantages could snowball. Benefits could include great tax savings (less welfare assistance and more income taxes from employed individuals), lower divorce rates, and decreased crime, which are all associated with high school graduation (Southern Regional Council, 1973).

Limitations of Discipline

Although ISS programs are a desirable alternative to OSS, poorly conceived ISS programs are little more than "holding tanks" and may function as brief stops on the way to OSS. Rather than focusing on behavior change, many of these poorly conceived ISS programs emphasize keeping students busy with school work and isolating them from other students (Dupper, Theriot & Craun, 2009). By failing to address and modify the behaviors that resulted in being assigned to ISS, students often return to their classrooms with the same, or worse, behaviors and end up in ISS on a repeated basis or get suspended out of school (Delisio, 2003).

Too many students are often assigned at once and some teachers are tardy in providing academic assignments. The number of days assigned to the center may not be contingent on student improvement, but unfortunately may be predetermined by the principal. Failure to notify parents before the assignment is a common mistake, and excessive reoccurrences for offenses such as truancy too often occurs. Some principals

abuse the program by assigning excessive days in the center for minor infractions (Nielson, 1979).

Many schools use both out-of-school (OSS) and in-school suspension to discipline students receiving special education (Rose, 1988). However, the use of in-school suspension for students with behavioral disorders has been a challenge legally, although its use has been upheld as long as procedural guidelines are followed (Yell, Cline, & Bradley, 1995). The use of disciplinary procedures with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) has proven to be a legal mine field for educators. Although both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as regulations implementing these laws are quite detailed, neither directly addresses the discipline of students with disabilities (Hartwig & Ruesch, 1994). If a student is protected under either the IDEA or Section 504, administrators and teachers face a different set of rules and limitations in using discipline than they do with a non-disabled student (Tucker, Goldstein, & Sorenson, 1993). In disciplining students with disabilities, administrators and teachers must recognize which students are protected under either law and plan discipline accordingly.

However, while studies examining the effectiveness of ISS have generally found these programs to be successful in reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions, there have been varying degrees of success in other important areas (Knopf, 1991). For example, Short & Noblett (1985) found that most ISS programs were mainly punitive and lacked a sufficient academic component. Other researchers found that ISS models often stressed punishment rather than rehabilitation and remediation (Casserly, Bass, & Garrett, 1980, Collins, 1985).

Summary

[Out of school] suspensions and expulsions seem to be ineffective methods of dealing with misbehavior because they do not appear to be a deterrent for future misconduct (Bock, Tapscott & Savner, 1998). Bock, Tapscott & Savner also stated that suspending students increased the probability that the suspended student would eventually dropout of school. Most students who are place on out-of-school suspension consider it to be vacation time. Suspending a student, in most cases, may simply accelerate the course of delinquency by allowing the youth to spend a few more days with troublesome peers (Skriba & Peterson, 1999).

In-school suspension finds its way into the school system as the gray area between mannerly students and students who are too dangerous to keep in the schools (Troyan, 2003). In school suspension is not meant for students who traffic drugs, or makes bomb threats; for those infringements require the action of out-of-school suspension or expulsion (Troyan, 2003). As important and meaningful this program can be designing and implementing one requires time, cooperation, and unity amongst teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators. Of course, when you throw as many people in the mix as you need to for a successful in-school suspension program, there tends to be difficulties (Nielsen, 1979).

Over the years ISS programs have managed to gain widespread acceptance as a common method of discipline in the United States (Silvey, 1995). With this rising use of ISS in schools today, it is critical to assess its value. A small number of studies have been conducted on in-school suspension programs (Bacon, 1990; Chobot & Garibaldi, 1982; Diem, 1988; Dupper, 1998). The majority of these studies focus on describing

program characteristics, types of offenses, and demographic characteristics of students served by these programs. Extensive data on the effectiveness of suspension programs is generally not available (Morrison & Anthony, 2001). Although ISS has been used in many schools for many years, it is a program that seems to remain in transition and undergoing constant modification (Chung, 1996).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

For this study, action research was performed using a qualitative procedure. The goal was to assess teachers' perceptions of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School. In order to gather all of the necessary data, I held interviews with teachers in the math and science disciplines who have taught for at least one full year at the high school. Each interview was conducted by asking 14 open-ended questions in the areas of potential benefits, potential limitations, and improvements. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in durations of 10-15 minutes. Interviews were then transcribed and the data was analyzed. Any widespread themes among the constructs were recorded. Through this coding process, only themes that the participants consistently supported were reported.

After the interviews were held and the data was analyzed, teachers in the same (math and science) departments were given a more specific survey based on the results from the interviews. The survey consisted of nine multiple choice questions and one short answer. This survey was used to get a more defined view of teachers' perceptions of the in-school suspension program. While exploring the data I sought to find commonly perceived benefits and limitations of the program amongst the teachers, as well as, areas for improvement.

Rationale for Method

Action research is frequently used by educators because it focuses on problem-solving and discovering new knowledge to aide in the decisions of teaching strategies (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The educational issue on which I focused was the effectiveness and value of the in-school suspension program. This was determined by assessing teachers' perceptions, and the results will be able to be used by other schools of similar demographics.

As noted before, it is not often that a piloted program looks the same in the first year as it does the second or third year. With this being said, I desired to know how the teachers preceived the program once it was up and running. This goal was best met through the use of qualitative research in which reccuring themes were discovered through transcript examination.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of teachers of the math and science departments with at least one year of experience at Centerville High School. Each teacher interviewed had at least one of their students placed in the ISS program at some point. Particularly, the results have some degree of external validity for teachers at a suburban, secondary high school. The results of the study are most applicable to suburban schools in the Midwest and of upper-middle socio-economic status.

Sample

Sample Criteria. 19 out of 42 teachers from the math and science department were chosen at random to be interviewed. Teachers that were part of the sample had at

least one year of experience at Centerville High School. Sample members also had one or more students removed from their class and placed in the in-school suspension.

Rationale for Sample. I narrowed my sample group to math and science teachers in order to keep my study as homogeneous as possible. I had to include two subject areas in order to gather a large enough sample. By choosing this sample group I was able to attain an appropriate n value. The total number of teachers achieved enough data collection to provide saturation and adequate external validity for the study's intended purpose.

Methods of Sampling. Sampling from the population occurred through random assignment within the disciplines in the math and science departments. Each teacher was assigned a number 1-42. The numbers were put into a random number generator and pulled when needed. The sample in which was used for this study constituted a sample from all suburban, public, Midwest high schools.

Procedure

Instruments. Interviews and surveys were the instruments used for data collection. The interviews were held between 10-15 minutes and were given prior to the surveys.

Major Constructs

3. How do math and science teachers perceive the benefits and limitations of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School?
4. In what areas do math and science teachers see needs for improvement of the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School?

Interview questions were prepared before hand around the major constructs of benefits, limitations, and improvements (Appendix A). After the interviews were held, a

questionnaire including ten question was given to validate any themes that were constructed through the interviews (Appendix B).

Pilot Study. A pilot study was held with four randomly selected teachers; two from the science department, and two from the math department. During this pilot study I recorded the time it took to conduct the semi-structured interviews. This would allow me to evaluate and revise the interview questions. This also allowed me adjust the questions to meet my time constraint of 10-15 minute interviews.

Data Collection Methods. Two types of data collection occurred; interviews and surveys. First, a set of 14 semi-structured questions were asked under the constructs of benefits, limitations and improvements (Appendix A). Teachers were randomly selected within the math and science departments. Qualifying teachers had taught in the high school for a minimum of one year and have had at least one of their students placed in the in-school suspension program. Each interview lasted 10-15 minutes.

After the interviews were completed, I selected more detailed questions in the form of a survey (Appendix B). The surveys were sent electronically to the math and science teachers. The questions for the survey were made in response to the common themes from the original transcripts.

Relevant Ethical Considerations. This action research was presented in an unbiased manner. Interview questions were not deviated from and time constraints were kept strictly between 10-15 minutes. Teachers were informed that confidentiality would be kept throughout the process. All names used in the transcription have been changed to protect the each teacher's identity.

Treatment Variable. The treatment variable in this action research was the ISS program. The assessed variables were the teachers' perceived benefits and limitations of the program. Areas that teachers saw need for improvements also were noted.

Methods of Data Analysis. All of the interviews held with the teachers were transcribed and organized according to questions. I was then able to easily compare the reactions to the use of the ISS program. In order to analyze the data, coding was used. Category names were assigned to segments of data. The first round of coding was done by comparing reoccurring constructs found throughout the data. In doing this, I removed codes that were did not frequently appear and added codes as they commonly appeared. When complete, I had a master list of codes. I then went through all the codes and noted themes that arose from the data.

Safeguards to Internal and External Validity. Interviews and surveys were not biased and were developed with neutral questioning. Interview questions were kept between a strict 10-15 minute time span. Each question was read from a script and was not deviated from. Questions were not manipulated or rephrased to help ensure internal validity.

Teachers selected to participate in this study taught sections that ranged in grade level and ability level. This could affect their perceptions of the ISS program. The use of direct quotes and low-inference descriptors were used in order to give accurate accounts of teacher perceptions.

In order to maintain internal validity the use of data triangulation was used. For methods triangulation I used more than one type of method to collect the data; I used interviews and surveys. For data triangulation, I used multiple data sources. After data

was collected, teachers were asked to go back and check the transcription to ensure accuracy.

After teachers checked through the transcriptions, a focus group was gathered to read through my conclusions. The focus groups gave feedback on how they perceived my results. Their feedback made sense to the participants and was aligned with my conclusions, as should be. This was another way to ensure internal validity.

Due to the fact that random sampling occurred within the math and science departments, the results were generalizable to the larger population. This positively affects the external validity of this study. However, generalization was not the main goal of the study, but it was the teachers' perceptions of the ISS program. The greater purpose was to provide information on the benefits and limitations of the ISS program. This will allow for improvements to be discussed. Even though the results of this action research cannot be generalized to all math and science departments, they are still able to be generalized to some degree. Schools with similar demographics and socio-economic status, can take from this study.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This study analyzed the teachers' perceptions of the ISS program at Centerville High School. The ISS program was designed to precede OSS. A student at Centerville High School was given a maximum of three Saturday schools in one school year. After a student had gone past their three Saturday schools they were then put on OSS. In order to keep students in school the ISS program was designed. Students who were not a danger to students or themselves, but fell past the punishment of a Saturday school, were placed in ISS. Teachers were notified by the administration that a student from their class was

placed in ISS. It was then the teacher's responsibility to gather work for that particular student and send it down to the ISS room before the day the suspension was to be served. The student was to sit quietly working on their assignments in the ISS room for one to three days, depending on the amount of days assigned by the administration. The ISS observer's duties were to monitor the students and be sure they were quiet and on task.

By analyzing the teachers' perceptions of the ISS program, I found that teachers thought the ISS program was either a somewhat or very effective program. Teachers thought that the ISS program was a good solution to removing students from the classroom, but keeping them inside the school building. Teachers also thought it was important that, even though a student was being punished, they were able to keep up with the work that they would be missing. This allowed students to keep up and not fall further behind. Teachers articulated areas of improvement for the ISS program as well, such as, having an ISS observer versus having a qualified teacher or counselor fill the position. Teachers thought an important improvement to the program would be adding a counseling aspect to it. Overall, teachers thought the ISS program was a valuable form of discipline, but needs to be improved.

Description of the Data

In order for data to be gathered and to obtain a large enough sample group, interviews were given to teachers within the math and science department. By choosing this sample group I was able to attain an appropriate n value. The total number of teachers surveyed achieved enough data collection to provide saturation and adequate external validity for the study's intended purpose. Each teacher had at least one student who was taken out of his or her class and placed in ISS. Teachers surveyed also had to

have been employed by Centerville City Schools for a minimum of one year. After the surveys were held, the responses were transcribed and organized according to questions. This allowed me to easily compare the reactions to the use of the ISS program. I used coding to analyze the data. First, I looked for reoccurring constructs that stood out amongst the data. Category names were assigned to the segments of data. As I continued through the data, I removed and added to the list of codes. When I was complete I had a master list of codes. I then went through the codes and put together the themes that surfaced from the data.

After holding the interviews and gathering the consistent themes that arose from the data, I put together a ten question survey to validate my conclusions. The ten questions were designed from the data collected in the interviews. The surveys were then sent out to the math and science department at Centerville High School. Surveys were only sent to teachers that had a minimum of one year employment at the high school, and also had exposure to the ISS program by having one or more students assigned to it. By gathering this data, I was able to validate my themes that derived from my interviews.

Benefits of the ISS Program

Keeps Students in School. Teachers clearly expressed the need for the ISS program as an alternative to OSS in certain situations. Teachers understood that some infractions deserved the punishment of OSS, but that there were cases where students were placed there due to the lack of an alternative. During the interviews, teachers commonly stated that it was important that students attend school and are not just given a free day. For example, Brett stated, “I think it still requires something of the student, as opposed to OSS, where it’s almost like they’re getting two-or three-day vacation at

home.” He went on to say, “And [the students] are required to work while they’re in [ISS].” This sentiment was echoed by another teacher, Claire, who stated that:

Students are more controlled in school. I think if they’re out of school, I feel like it’s a free day for them. A lot of time kids...have had parental issues, where their parents aren’t around as much, therefore, if they’re on OSS, they’re not probably doing anything structured.

Attendance is a real issue for some students. There are a lot of cases where the student doesn’t have a good home structure and expectations are not written clearly. Debby, another teacher who teaches lower-level classes says, that for her students, “they have a hard time just staying in the classroom, so putting them in ISS, they’re actually here.” Just getting the student to come to school can be hard enough, if a student needs punished, it’s best to keep them in the building.”

Gwen believes that a lot of kids get put on OSS because of what she calls, “sins of omission,” not doing things, especially not attending school and not attending classes. In this case, OSS is just what the student is looking for. Gwen believes that ISS makes more sense here. If teachers and administration are able to keep the students in the building where they still have to complete their work, it can be more of a deterrent for students to cut classes or skip school in general.

Teachers and administrators are always trying to keep students in school. The reason some students have trouble in school is because their home life out of school is suffering. Some students come from homes that lack structure and stability. If a child comes from a single parent family, that parent is usually working during the day. When a

student gets placed on OSS, they are sent back to the home. In his interview, Matt states, “If the student comes from a single parent family, and that parent happens to be working, then there is no one to supervise the student.” Nancy gave a similar statement saying that by sending students home leaves the students, in some cases, alone, unsupervised, and likely to get into more trouble. ISS is a great alternative to this problem. One quote from a teacher was, “Usually the students assigned to OSS want the day out, so it is comparable to a reward”. A comment on one of the surveys stated, “The types of kids who warrant this extreme level of discipline are ultimately getting exactly what they want. Students who are not endangering other students or themselves need to be in school. This is one of the main reasons the ISS program was designed. This was illustrated by Oscar when he said:

ISS gives a student a whole day to think about their actions yet at the same time keeps in pace with the class. I believe students should be able to make up their work that they missed. I believe this to be one of the perks, if you will, of the ISS program. This will help students to keep up with the classes pace. It is still punishment for the student to have to stay in one room the whole day, but at the same time they are still able to get credit for their work.

Again, I think this goes to show how ISS is a middle ground between a Saturday school, where students are just to attend out side of school, and OSS where students don't have to come to school, but lose credit.

Credit for ISS. In order for students to have something to do while in ISS, it is important for teachers to send assignments down to the ISS room. Student on ISS are still able to make their work up for full credit. This is very important for students who are

already behind. It would be next to impossible for some to get marked zeros for the assignments missed. Debby says, “[In ISS] students are still able to do their work; otherwise there would be no way they would ever graduate high school.” 80% of the teachers surveyed said they thought teachers should provide work for students to complete during their in-school suspension, only 60% of them thought the students should receive full or partial credit on those assignments.

Ed believes that students should receive full credit for any work they are given in ISS. He believes that teachers are here for the students and their success. Ed says, “I don’t think it benefits the student ever...to keep them from their academics.” Frank agreed that students should be able to get full credit on their work. His thoughts were, “I’m okay with [students] being able to make up their work in ISS for full credit, because if they’re in ISS as opposed to OSS, then it’s for a different disciplinary reason.” Gwen thought that as long as a student was in attendance, then they should be allowed to make up their work for credit. Heather agreed by stating, “I think it’s good that they can get their credit for [their work]...if anything, I would say at least partial credit.” Matt echoed by saying, “I think that students benefit from getting to make up their work for credit.” It’s hard enough to get some students to do their work when they are getting credit. Nancy says, “Why would a student do work if they know it’s not going to be graded? I think students should be able to make up work they missed for full credit.”

Teachers in general thought it was important that students were able to make up their work for credit. Troublesome students who were already behind would only fall further behind if no credit was awarded. Jessica, for example, states, “I really like ISS better than OSS because of the fact that they are still required to do their work and they

have to turn stuff in...with OSS, they just can't make up their work, which would put them further behind." Laura adds by saying, "What we are trying to do here with the ISS program is to keep the students in school and on track so that they do not fall behind."

Limitations

Sending and Receiving. Sending and receiving work to and from the ISS room has shown to be a headache to the teachers. One common complaint among the teachers was they didn't feel that they received adequate advanced notice when their students were placed in ISS. Teachers didn't feel that they had sufficient time to get assignments together to send down. For example, Gwen said in her interview, "I got the e-mail that they needed the student's work by Monday, but I didn't get [the email] until after I left school on Friday, so it was a problem." Teachers also mentioned that the late notice would mess up their routine at the beginning of their class. When Isabella received late notice she said, "At the beginning of class...while passing out papers, I have to put it in a pile off to the side and have my faculty assistant run it down." Isabella then went on to say, "Last year it was more annoying because I didn't have a faculty assistant." Laura echoed by saying, "It seems like we don't get enough notice when the student is going to be placed in ISS and I have to get all the homework together for that student."

Not only getting adequate notice of when a student is being placed in ISS has shown to be problematic, but also the time in which the assignments were returned to the teachers. This was clearly illustrated by Jessica:

Like I said before...turnaround time of when we get [feedback] of [our students] in ISS, when we have to get work in to them and then when we get the work back. That's been kind of a laggy thing. If we could get it more

streamlined and have a couple days to prepare and get it in and then get it immediately back...that would help. It's not that bad, except when it's, "I need it tomorrow." Or I've sent it through school mail and then I'm getting e-mails the next day saying, "I have no work for such-and-such." I had [faculty assistants] take a test down; still, it took a week to get the test back. I need it sooner than that. If they had someone, like a student helper or a faculty assistant, when they run, go pick up the assignments from all the teachers, drop off assignment to all the teachers, I mean that might be more beneficial.

Frank talked about how he had students complete the work in ISS but then the assignments were not returned to him from the ISS room immediately. He mentioned a time when a couple of assignments showed up in his mailbox two weeks after midterms had already passed. Frank pointed out that it was great to get the work back, but at this point the midterm grades had already gone into the mail and he had to go back and change the grade in the system. Frank stated, "It just wasn't very efficient". It was Nancy who stated, that "in order to get a students work down to the ISS room in time for the student to work on it...it can be very time consuming and stressful." Another teacher, Kara, stated:

It's a royal pain. First of all, the form that you have to type on the computer is not friendly. It's impossible to get spacing to work as you wish. If you try to cut and paste from an existing lesson plan, it doesn't fit. The template I find very awkward to use. The timeframe of finding out that students get placed in ISS versus when the assignments are sometime due are very difficult to meet.

Improvements

Staffing the ISS program. Teachers expressed the importance of having a good ISS monitor. Brett says, “I think forcing the students to work while they’re in ISS instead of letting them have free time is important.” Matt states, “I think employing an ISS supervisor that will uphold the rules and hold kids accountable is very important, maybe a stern person with some kind of background with dealing with troubled youth.” An ISS program needs to be run by a person who is not going to let the students take advantage of them, someone who is going to maintain a proper atmosphere. This was best pointed out by Isabella when she said, “The ISS program is only going to be as effective as its instructor.” Other teachers on the surveys wrote that maybe a corrections facility officer or rotating principals would be more effective. Another teacher wrote, “It should be run by someone capable of running a no-nonsense style environment with a great deal of structure and little room for relaxation.” It was clear that the teachers thought whoever is placed in this position needed to be trained to work with these high risk kids.

This type of position is not a position of high reward. You don’t have students thanking you for making them walk a straight line for eight straight hours. It would take a specially trained person to be able to deal with these students day in and day out. Frank best expressed this view when he said:

We have one person that supervises the room all day, every day and so, while you’re doing that, you’re not actively teaching, you’re not actively in instruction. You’re just there in kind of like almost a pseudo prison warden-type role. That’s something that’s very easy to burn out someone’s focus and concentration. It’s just not as effective

because, if you have to repeatedly do that...mind numbing is the way I would describe it. And it's something where it's not the type of work that you just come into and give your full effort every day. And there's no reward involved in it, either. You're not dealing with good students. It's a thankless task that one guy is assigned to do 40 hours a week and that I think is another problem with it. I think that's making the problem where students are not getting their work done, because at some point you just kind of give up. No one has the fortitude to fight that fight for years and years and years.

This was a common theme amongst the teachers. Oscar agreed by saying, "It would be very difficult and unrewarding to have to sit in a room for eight hours while trying to maintain an attitude of silence." Frank mentioned that it might be a good idea for teachers to have duty periods where teachers could rotate so you are only spending one period a day in the room. He went on to say, "If you have to be strict and stern and hard for fifty minutes, that's fine, because, when it's over, you go back to your regular day. Amanda also mentioned that teachers could rotate responsibility supervising the program. She also stated, "The ISS monitor could be on some sort of rotation, like maybe a morning instructor and afternoon." By doing this, the supervisor would be less likely to lose interest in this position. Heather agreed and went on to say, "You're not there constantly dealing with that negative energy all day long and so it's not going to drain you."

Counseling/Behavioral Intervention. Another theme that emerged from the data collected was the need for some sort of counseling or behavior intervention aspect. Though most of the teachers think the ISS program is between somewhat and very effective, 93% of the teachers surveyed thought a counseling or behavioral intervention

aspect to the in-school suspension program would be beneficial. This was illustrated by Nancy, who said, “Possibly an intervention or counseling session as to why they are in ISS and how they are going to keep themselves out of trouble might help.” She then said, “I think this could be the most beneficial to students. “ In another interview, Claire had mentioned to have students talk with a school psychiatrist about ways to improve [their behavior], or to help them actually understand what they have done.” Laura had a similar thought when she said, “I think by adding a counseling aspect to the program, students would be able to reflect on why they were given an ISS and what they can do to keep themselves from getting another one.” Claire wrote:

I think that they should be responsible for specific assignments. Maybe character assignments or some type of self-improvement assignment. It doesn't have to be challenging but something that will get the kid to maybe think about their behavioral issues. Maybe have one of the school psychologists or somebody who works with kids that could sit down and discuss why they got in trouble, or ways of improvement. Something where they have to actually understand what they've done.

Sometimes students just need to talk, not all of them know how to communicate their feelings so they keep it bottled up inside until they no longer can. One teacher wrote on their survey, “Students should have someone to talk to about why they are in in-school suspension and design a plan to keep them from going back.” This can lead to students acting out. In Matt's interview he says:

I have heard that in other ISS programs, part of the day is used to make up the work the student is missing, and then the other part of the day is sort of like a counseling session.

I think this would be really good given the fact that the students need to reflect on why they are in the ISS room. Also, students are always looking for attention or someone to talk with. If you give them someone to talk to instead of just giving them busy work and making them be silent, I think you would have a much bigger impact.

There is a lot going on in the lives of students, especially at the high school level. They are trying to figure out who they are and where they belong. There is a lot of pressure placed on students to fit in and be accepted. Jessica added, “I know funding might be an issue, but we could possibly hire a school counselor for the position to give the students someone to talk with.”

Nancy had a good point when she said:

[Students] are always trying to fit in, and discover who they are. This causes students to do things they normally wouldn't. They don't know how to get attention any other way, so they act out. They fall into peer pressure and they don't focus on their studies like they should. By having a counselor there to talk to the students is the only way to get to the root of the problem, not by making them sit silent in the same room all seven periods.

Oscar agreed that their needs to be a counselor or intervention specialist that meets with the students while they are in ISS. Oscar says, “Kids need adults to talk to. It helps them mature. It is an important process of their development.” One teacher said:

I think having the students attend school is vital to their consequence. They need to be held accountable, punctual,

dressed appropriately. As stated in an earlier question, I think our program (in its infancy) should incorporate homework for classes; behavior modification from school psychologist (maybe 1 hr/day) and community service (... clean around school, etc).

Other comments from the surveys given support the case that a counselor or behavior intervention aspect needs to accompany the ISS program. One teacher said that most students weren't going to get the counseling from home. Another teacher mentioned that if the student was suspended for behavioral issues, then adding this component would be beneficial.

Summary

In summary, this study expressed the teacher's perceptions of the ISS program at Centerville High School. The benefits of ISS as an alternative to the OSS program, and allowing students to receive credit for their work clearly surfaced from the compiled data. The limitations examined were brought to light and questions were raised on how to better streamline communication and the sending and receiving of assignments from the ISS monitor to the teacher. Improvements suggested by the teachers were few. A counseling or behavior intervention aspect within the ISS program was the only improvement that was accepted at large.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

After reviewing the data and analyzing the results, it is clear that the ISS program at Centerville High School can be a valuable disciplinary tool. The benefits of the program, improving attendance, keeping students up to pace, and accepting assignments for credit can be a great alternative to OSS for the right infractions. Also, the limitations

found in the study were few and could be overcome with the right program design and training. The reported results lead to practical steps to aid in the design of an effective ISS program. Results also can be compared to previous studies of ISS programs.

Interpretation of Results.

Attendance. It is always a struggle in schools to keep certain students in attendance. Over 85% of teachers thought that the ISS program was a more effective form of discipline than only having out-of-school suspension. Teachers believed that students who find themselves receiving disciplinary action due to truancy and excessive tardiness need consequences that are going to help them engage in school and be held accountable. The ISS program is designed to remove students from the classroom, isolate them, hold them responsible for any work missed that day, and at the same time keeping them at in school.

Credit. Most students either won't realize it or won't admit it, but ISS is vital to the student's success. Loss of a day's credit for a student can be as little as daily participation points, but as steep as test grade. There is a good chance that students who are placed in ISS for reasons for truancy have already missed the credit for work that was done while they were skipping. Teachers agreed that by keeping the students in school and allowing them to make up their work for credit is a way of punishing the students' actions without sacrificing their grade.

Keeping On Track. When a student is placed on OSS, not only do they lose whatever credit was given, they completely miss what was done that day in class. This combination of loss can be detrimental to a student's success. Within the ISS program, though students are not participating in the classroom, they are still participating in the

daily classroom assignments. Teachers believe that by keeping students on pace with the rest of the class will be key to the students transition back into the classroom.

During the interviews the teachers voiced the need for the ISS program at Centerville High School. It was apparent that the program was, in a lot of cases, a viable alternative to OSS. However, limitations voiced by teachers also provided clear evidence of other elements that needed attention. Knowing that this program was in its infancy, a lot of the problems can be minimized in a few changes of the program's design. For example, teachers expressed their concern of tardy requests for student work and the delayed return of materials. This issue could easily be resolved with a little accountability and help from administrators. Teachers also noted the inconvenience of having to put together assignments and take them down to the ISS room. In the interviews, some teachers expressed the need for faculty assistants in the ISS room in the first and last period of the day. This would allow students to go around and pick up assignments from teachers, alleviating the nuisance of having to make the trip. Teachers could also have student assignments returned to them the same day they were given.

Even though many of the teachers thought that the ISS program was, as least, somewhat effective, almost all teachers agreed that a counseling or behavior intervention aspect would be beneficial. Teachers expressed that, possibly, students could spend part of their day silent and working on their assignments, while another part of their day was spent talking with a counselor. It was mentioned that students and counselors could sit down and talk about why the student was in ISS and then design a plan to keep the student from returning. Teachers also thought that the program would benefit if it were ran by someone other than a study hall monitor, but instead rotating teachers and

administrators, or possibly a school counselor. With a program as young as this one, teachers expressed the need for improvement, however, only the ones commonly expressed were mentioned.

Potential Applications of the Findings

Selecting an ISS Monitor. In the findings, teachers have noted the importance to finding the right person to monitor the program. Teachers argued that the ISS environment, in order to be effective, must be one of structure. It was stated that the program is only going to be as effective as the person monitoring it. The teachers agreed the person employed for this position should be trained and have experience dealing with at risk students.

Invest in Training. It would be very beneficial for administration to invest in some sort of workshop or training seminar, not only for the ISS monitor, but also for the whole teacher population. A chain of communication could be put in effect, and there would be a lesser chance of unmet expectations. With this study being performed and teachers and administrators being aware of the benefits and limitations, we could seek out ISS programs that are having a positive effect on their students. We could model our program after this one, and possibly bring some of the staff to our school to help implement the changes.

Student Assignments. Understanding that sending and receiving student assignments to and from the ISS room has been such a problem, it is obvious this issue needs some attention. Some solutions mentioned by the teachers were to set up faculty assistants in the ISS room for at least the first and last periods of the day. This would

allow students to pick up materials in the morning and have them returned to the teachers in the afternoon.

Counseling Aspect. Teachers were strongly in favor of adding a counseling or behavior intervention aspect to the program. A few ideas had to do with breaking the day up into sections. In these sections, some students would work on assignments, while other students could do some in-school service. Throughout the day, students would get a chance to sit down with a counselor or school psychiatrist to discuss their behavior and develop a plan to keep them from coming back to the program.

Graduation Rate. Administrators are always trying to boost their schools report card. It is good for them, the teachers, and the community. One way administrators are able to keep students in school while still administering punishment is the ISS program. By having students in school, they keep up their attendance. Also, by allowing students to make up their work for credit they are keeping their grades up, increasing their chances for graduation.

Biblical Integration

When we think about disciplining children, usually the first thing that comes to mind is some sort of punishment, maybe spanking, timeout, grounding, or within the schools some sort of detention or suspension. Usually a very negative view comes to mind. If we think of discipline from a biblical perspective, we compare the word discipline to disciple. The disciples followed Christ as he modeled to them how to live like Himself and please God. In a similar way, our sons and daughters look to us as we try to spur them on to the image of Christ.

Hebrews 12:11 states, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” As educators, it is our calling to bring students back to Him. Children can easily look at discipline and wonder why we would want to hurt them. At the doctor’s office, I have to hold my little girl down while the nurse sticks needles into my daughter's leg. She then looks at me and screams, and I can only imagine her thoughts; “Why are you letting them do this to me.” Of course, we know that it is a necessity for the well-being of my daughter. We love, so we discipline.

Proverbs 23:13 tells us “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.” We are called to discipline. Proverbs 6:23 says, “For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.” We are actually disobeying God by withholding discipline.

The Bible says in Proverbs 29:15, “The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.” Children need to be given boundaries with expectations and consequences—without these, children will go astray. The same way I would put a fence around my house, to keep my children safe at play and to keep them out of harms way. A parent, who doesn’t love their child, would let them wander, which could eventually lead to pain and suffering.

Since our goal is to model a life after Christ and to educate our youth, we have expectations in our classroom. If these expectations aren’t followed, then the students will face consequences. This is put in place so that the students get the most out of their educational experiences. 1 Corinthians 11:32 says, “When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” Christ loves us

so much, that he disciplines us. As educators; we are to discipline our students, so that it produces knowledge, discipline and discernment.

Discipline versus Punishment

As educators, we need to be sure we understand the difference between punishment and discipline. By disciplining, we are teaching and modeling to our students what they should be doing and try to make them take responsibility for their actions. Discipline centers on guiding and cultivating and has a lasting effect that changes hearts. Punishment, on the other hand, takes the focus away from the lesson that is to be learned and puts it on who is in control. Punishment offers little or nothing to help a child behave better in the future. Usually, children who are punished are only sorry that they got caught and not that they have done something wrong.

I believe it is vital to the success and effectiveness of the ISS program that it centers on discipline and not punishment. Within the ISS program, it is essential that the focus be on what the student is expected and allowed to do, and not on their past behaviors. Parents, teachers, and administrators should work together to help students gain better self-discipline. The only way students learn self-discipline is by experiencing it. This experience coupled with positive student achievement can lead to the motivation necessary to organize one's life so that success is possible.

By having the instructor(s) set aside time and organize the materials to help develop student skills and achievement, it will help reach the goal of giving students a satisfying experience they will want to repeat. Only this will allow students to gain the self-discipline to make positive changes in their behavior. However, all of this must be

accomplished to the fulfillment of the student's personal and individual goals. If this does not happen, the best a student could learn is conformity.

Relation of the Results to Literature

Analyzing the results after becoming familiar with the current literature on ISS programs has supported my findings. Previous research done on ISS programs sustains my findings of the teachers' perceptions. In this study, teachers mention the need for students to keep up with the work that they are missing that day in class. Not only will the student have a better chance of not falling behind, but they will receive credit for the work that they did. Nielson (1979) also suggested that students need to be in a supervised area where they will be required to continue to do their work and be less likely to fall behind. He also mentioned that the students will not have the opportunity to be disruptions in the classroom, while others can be assured and environment conducive to learning.

Another relationship from the literature to this study was the use of a counseling intervention within the ISS program. In this study, teachers expressed the need for a counseling or behavior intervention feature to the ISS program to help students get to the bottom of their issues. Similarly, in Knopf's (1991) study she believes that when student misbehaviors are treated as the problem rather than as a symptom of some deeper problem, the disciplinary measures fail more often than succeed because they do not make an effort to identify and remedy the cause(s) of the inappropriate behavior. It was also found in the literature that Hochman and Worner (1987) found when students were placed in group counseling they were able to reduce truancy, increase attendance, raise grade point average, and improve overall student behavior.

Delisio (2003) echoes this, by not addressing the reason or cause behind why a student was assigned to ISS, the student has a greater chance of returning to the program. Similar in thought to the teachers interviewed, Deslisio thinks that students will return to their classrooms with the same, or worse, behaviors resulting in another ISS.

Other current findings in this study have shown that teachers believe students should be kept in school for reasons of supervision. They believe when students are placed on OSS, they are more likely to get into trouble. 77% of teachers surveyed believed that the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School provided more academic instruction than OSS. Teachers also believe in many benefits for the parents and the community. Likewise, Nielson (1979), talks about when schools are able to assign students ISS, as opposed to OSS, they are protecting the community from vandalism, helping employed parents with supervision, and gaining financial compensation through raising attendance records.

In my recent findings, teachers thought that the ISS monitor or instructor had a great deal to do with the success and effectiveness of the program. Teachers noted that the program needed an individual who would keep students accountable and held to certain expectations. Teachers also pointed out the possible need for more than one monitor. They believed that the unrewarding task of the ISS monitor would begin to wear on an individual and that possibly having duty periods or teachers to rotate might be more effective. Similarly, Sheets (1996) believed that the instructor would make or break the program. He believed that the person placed in this position should be well trained

and often evaluated. Also, this person should be given appropriate funding, materials, and auxiliary staff.

Strengths of the Study

This project involved action research which resulted in a healthy amount of findings that can be applied in other educational systems. In order to keep the sample as homogeneous as possible, surveys and interviews were given to math and science departments, as opposed to being given across all disciplines. This was done in order to gain the greatest detail and depth of discussion. Two disciplines were used for purposes of sample size. Interviews were held with teachers within a 10-15 minute time frame, where I was sure not to deviate from the script in order to maintain consistency.

The methods of data collection involved triangulation and saturation of data. Random teachers were selected to be interviewed within the math and science departments. The interviews were then transcribed and sifted through for common themes. A survey was then put together and sent out to the teachers, the data from these surveys further confirmed my findings. Analysis of the transcripts and the surveys showed consistent and repeated results. Further data collection was not necessary and would have likely produced equivalent results.

Limitations of the Study

Remaining Threats to Internal Validity. Using teacher interviews resulted in a large number of data given by the students. Given that the amount of information to sift through was lofty, common arguments were relatively few. Open-ended questions throughout the interviews were great for gathering a wide range of data. However, the surveys formed from the data offered mainly objective answers; few gave explanations.

Since the interviews were time consuming and done one at a time, the number of interviews held was limited to data saturation. Since all teachers in the math and science departments at Centerville High School were given the opportunity to take a survey, this meant there were teachers who were not interviewed taking the surveys. However, if the same number of teachers were interviewed that were surveyed, the change in results would be negligible since saturation was obtained.

Another limitation to this study involved teachers who had only one student placed in ISS opposed to teachers who have had students attend on a regular basis. Also, teachers who have been in the district longer were able to become more familiar with the OSS program and other forms of discipline, whereas, a teacher who only has one year in has not had much exposure. However, exposure to the ISS program should be relatively equal since the program had only been around for two years.

Remaining threats to external validity. Threats to the external validity come in the form of people, places, and time. I believe the teachers in this study are a good representation of the population of teachers in the high school. To generalize this study across the country I believe you would need to find schools with similar demographics and socio-economic status. With times changing and students changing every year, this study might eventually be outdated. However, suburban schools, sharing similar demographics can still benefit for this educational information.

Suggestions for Future Research.

This study should be expanded to the other disciplines within the high school, as well as expanded to other school systems with different demographics. Since research on this study was done qualitatively, the next step would be to carry out a quantitative study

to analyze these results. For example, teachers perceived this study to be effective, now actual academic effects that the ISS program has on students should be assessed.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have any of your students been placed in ISS before?
2. Compare your perceptions of the ISS program to the OSS program at Centerville High School.

Potential Benefits

3. What do you think works best in the ISS program?
4. Students in ISS are able to make up the work they miss in class that day and receive full credit for those assignments. Do you think students should be able to make up their work for full credit or not? Why or why not?
5. Have you seen a change in the behavior of students after they have spent time in ISS?
6. Do you feel that removing a student from class and placing him/her in ISS benefits the rest of the students in that class?
7. Discuss any other potential benefits that you see from the ISS Program.

Potential Limitations

8. What do you believe works least in the ISS program?
9. What problems have you noticed with the ISS program? Give specific examples of any problems that have happened in class.
10. When one of your students gets placed in ISS, it is your responsibility to gather the students work and send it down to the ISS room. How has the added responsibility affected you?
11. Have any of your students been taken out of class and placed in ISS? If so, how easy or difficult it the process on you as a teacher? Explain.
12. Give any other potential liabilities that you see from the ISS Program.

Improvements

13. Explain two things that potentially would make the ISS program better.
14. Please give a final summary statement on your perceptions of the ISS program at Centerville High School.

APPENDIX B

1. Out-of school suspension is:

- an effective form of discipline.
- an ineffective form of discipline.
- a free day for students.
- necessary for school safety.

Comments

2. How effective do you feel the in-school suspension program was at Centerville High School?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective at All
ISS	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Effective at All

Comments

3. Do you think teachers should provide work for students to complete during in-school suspension?

- Yes
- No

Comments

4. Students placed in in-school suspension should be able to make up the work they are missing that day in class for:

Full Credit

Partial Credit

No Credit

Comments

5. Do you feel that adding a counseling or behavioral intervention aspect to the in-school suspension program would be beneficial?

Yes

No

Comments

6. Do you think an in-school suspension program would be a more effective form of discipline than only having out-of-school suspension?

Yes

No

Comments

7. Do you think the in-school suspension program at Centerville High School provided more academic instruction than out-of-school suspension?

Yes

No

Comments

8. An effective in-school suspension program should be monitored by:

Anyone

Highly Qualified Teacher

Rotating Teachers

School Counselor/Psychologist

Other (Please Specify)

9. Do you feel that it is necessary to have an in-school suspension program at Centerville High School?

Yes

No

Comments

10. What are your perceptions of the in-school suspension program that was at Centerville High School? (Benefits, Limitations, Improvements, etc.)



FIGURE 1

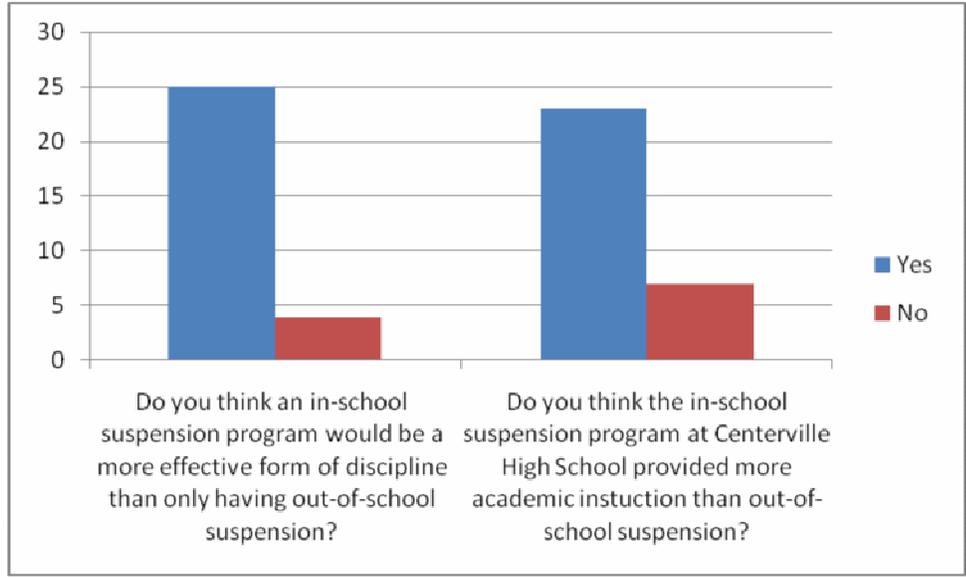


FIGURE 2

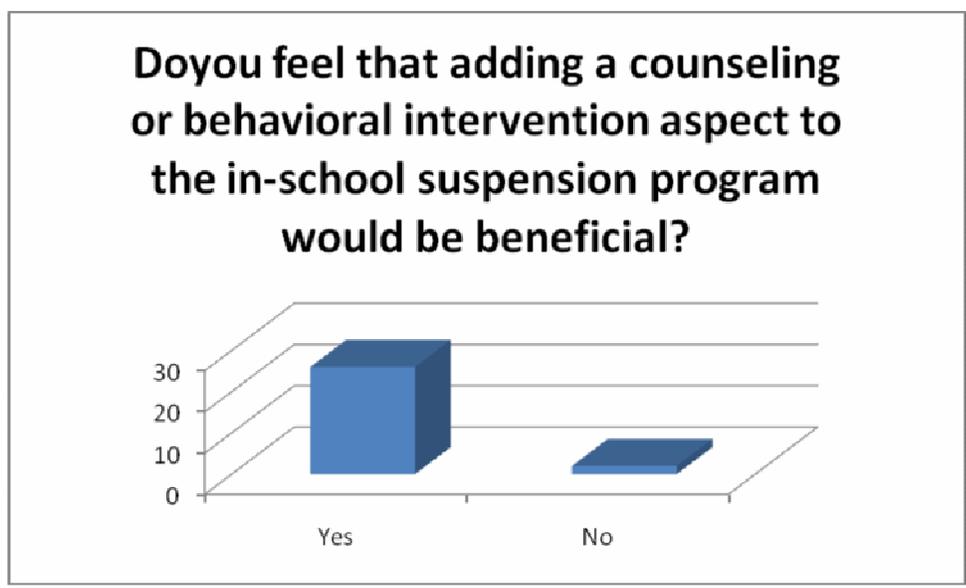
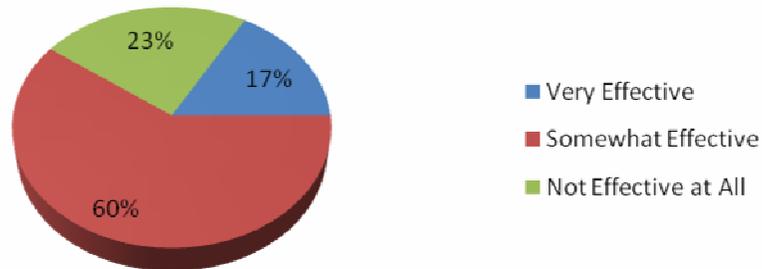


FIGURE 3

How effective do you feel the in-school suspension program was at Centerville High School?



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