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Intervention Strategies to Decrease Discipline Issues in an Urban pre-K-8 Public School

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Wendy A. Mason

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Intervention Strategies to Decrease Discipline Issues

in an Urban pre-K-8 Public School

by

Wendy A. Mason

MEd, Walden University, 2005

BA, Kean University, 1979

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2015

Abstract

The educational problem addressed in this study was the lack of empirically grounded evidence of the intervention strategies an urban school in the northeast region of the United States used to decrease school discipline problems. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used by school personnel to decrease discipline problems. The conceptual framework was anchored in social learning and communities of practice theories. The research questions focused on identifying the types of student discipline problems, the strategies developed and deployed to decrease the discipline problems, and the outcomes of the strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants: 1 administrator, 10 teachers, and 1 counselor. Archival documents such as incident reports, discipline referral forms, the school's year-end report, and district suspensions reports were also examined for discipline patterns. Data analysis strategies included transcribing interview data, identifying patterns, and data triangulation. Results indicated that disrespect, noncompliant behavior, willful disobedience, fighting, and bullying were major discipline problems at the school. A multiplicity of strategies such as in-school and out-of-school suspension and character education effectively decreased discipline issues. Recommendations include a regular review of prevention strategies to determine which strategies are effective at reducing discipline. Positive social change implications include implementing invention strategies that create safe learning environments for students and staff in which all students can achieve academic success that leads to timely graduation and productive and responsible citizenship in the communities in which students live.

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Dedication

To my husband, Rev. Eugene Harris, whose steadfast love, encouragement, patience, and prayers have been unwavering throughout this doctoral journey.

And… to my mother, Mrs. Fannie M. Mason (Dr. Mason) who transitioned from this life, but left a legacy of expectation for her children to strive for excellence and to be the best you can be; who never wanted us to settle for less, knowing we can, through the help of God do all things as He give us strength. You set the example when you went back to school later in life to complete your own personal goals. You've always been so proud of all my accomplishments.

Finally, to my siblings Harvey, Sheila, Marvin, Darlene, Kenneth, Hattie, and Octavia, who constantly reassured me and cheered me on, read each revision, offered many suggestions, and helped me keep things in perspective.

This work is dedicated to you. I love you all eternally.

Acknowledgements

In recognition of this monumental achievement, I first acknowledge God who is the giver and sustainer of my life and has made all things possible.

Many thanks to all of the Walden University instructors throughout the course of this program, especially my study chairperson, Dr. Wallace Southerland, III, for his supervision of the committee, suggestions, recommendations, support, and guidance; my 2nd committee member, Dr. Clifton Addison, for his methodology expertise, suggestions, and continued support; and Dr. Anita Dutrow for serving as University Research Reviewer on this committee. Because of the tutelage given me I have been able to complete this chapter in my educational pursuits.

Thank you to the school district and my principal, for permission to conduct the study.

I would also like to acknowledge and give special thanks to my awesome husband, Eugene, and my siblings, Harvey, Sheila, Marvin, Darlene, Kenneth, Hattie, and Octavia, for their constant encouragement, steadfast love, and unending prayers for my success. You will never know how much it means to me to be so loved.

God bless you all.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) is an educational reform law that focused attention on improving education in the United States. NCLB established seven priorities that address public school reform and improvement in both elementary and secondary schools across the United States. The seven priorities identified in the NCLB Act required states to do the following: (a) reward individuals schools and school districts that meet the established standards and sanction those schools and school districts that fail to meet the standards; (b) close the achievement gap through the establishment of high standards and accountability, annual assessments, and consequences for schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP); (c) hire highly qualified teachers; (d) improve literacy by establishing a comprehensive reading program; (e) allow parents to make informed decisions regarding educational options for their children; (f) grant school districts flexibility in spending the increased federal funds; and (g) establish a safe environment for students, school staff, and parents (NCLB, 2002). Therefore, classroom management is of vital importance in order to meet the mandate instituted by the NCLB (2002) Act of establishing a safe environment for students, school staff, and parents (Shawer, 2011; Victor, 2005). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001) reported the number of students acting out or exhibiting aggressive behaviors are steadily increasing and may contribute to an unsafe learning and teaching environment. Discipline has been identified as a predominant problem in schools in the past 30 years (Langdon & Vesper, 2000; Shirvani, 2012).

The 2007 Gallup Poll (Rose & Gallup, 2007) cited discipline as one of the biggest problems facing American schools second only to lack of funding (Budshaw & McNee, 2009). According to the poll, two thirds of parents surveyed did not believe that their children were safe at school or in surrounding neighborhoods because of bullying, intimidation, and fighting (Rose & Gallup, 2007). School, Crime and Safety (2010) reported that throughout the 2007–08 school year, 25 % of public schools in the United States reported that bullying among students was experienced every day and in some cases weekly, as another 11% reported that student acts of disrespect towards teachers, other than verbal abuse, took place on a daily or weekly basis.

Indicators of School Crime and Safety (2010) discovered the following:

> In relationship to other discipline problems disclosed as happening at least once a week, 6 percent of public schools reported student verbal abuse of teachers, 4 percent reported widespread disorder in the classroom, 4 percent reported student racial/ethnic tensions, and 3 percent reported student sexual harassment of other students. (p. 30)

A survey conducted in 2008 of schools in the state of New Jersey also listed discipline as one of the biggest problems facing schools today (New Jersey Department of Education Report, 2008). The number of reported incidents by schools in the state was 11,219 for the year 2007-2008 (New Jersey Department of Education Report, 2008). Moreover, The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences reported in 2007–08 that 34% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the misbehavior of students impeded the

ability to teach, and 32% reported that student lateness and class cutting hampered the teaching process (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).

Problems with students' discipline are also more acute in schools with the highest concentration of economically disadvantaged students (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Thomas & Bierman, 2006). Students who receive free or reduced lunches and reside in low-income or poverty-stricken areas reportedly had a higher rate of disciplinary actions recorded in the schools (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Thomas & Bierman, 2006). Further reports suggested that those schools with high rates of low-income students or students being from low-income families had an increased probability of referrals for disciplinary infractions in the classrooms (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2008; Gregory, et al.,2010; Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002; Skiba et al., 2002; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008; Wu, Pink, Cain, & Moles, 1982).

The National Education Association (2004) estimated that about one third of teachers quit in the first 5 years of teaching. The statistics for the mass exodus among neophyte teachers are alarming. About 20% of novice teachers relinquish or depart the classroom in the first 3 years (Weiss & Gary, 1999). The numbers have been significantly greater in urban school districts where an upwards of 50% of new teachers abandoned the field of education during the first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). According to the National Education Association (2008), lack of classroom management skills was one of the reasons teachers left the profession. Lack of effective management techniques in the classroom will result in decreased teaching time and more time spent on off-task

behavior. Subsequently, learning tends to decrease in a chaotic, poorly managed classroom (Canter, 2010; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Jones and Jones (2007) stated 50% of classroom instructional time was lost as a result of student misbehavior and that approximately 99% of those quintessential classroom interruptions derived from students talking out of turn without permission, making noise, disturbing others, being out of their seats, wandering around the room, leaving classrooms without permission, and defiance. When low level aggressive behavior such as talking at inappropriate times is not dealt with effectively and in a timely manner, the misbehaviors interfere with teaching and learning, thus resulting in poor individual, school, and community outcomes (Conoley & Goldstein, 2004; Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2009; Kelly, 2010). Both Allen (1996) and Marzano (2003) concluded that teachers must make every attempt to promote order in the classroom by providing students with clear rules that must be followed, clear consequences for inappropriate behaviors, as well as providing rewards for appropriate behaviors.

In sum, the local educational problem that was the focus of this investigation was the lack of empirically grounded evidence on strategies used to decrease discipline problems. The topic was worthy of study and a significant educational problem because students cannot reach their maximum learning potential in a disruptive, chaotic educational setting, and neither can teachers instruct in settings not conducive to learning. Skills and strategies to keep order in the classroom are of vital importance to teachers, administrators, and communities throughout the country because it is an integral part of the NCLB legislation which specified that schools must establish a safe environment for

students, school staff, and parents (Little, 2006; National Middle School Association, 2003; NCLB, 2002). Teachers who manage the classroom effectively are better able to maximize instructional time and improve student academic achievement (Marzano, 2003; Skiba, & Peterson, 2003). A lack of order in the classroom may not only result in decreased instructional time for teachers and loss of student learning, but may also contribute to long-term unhealthy school climates for all (Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Marzano, 2003). Further discussion and current issues in research addressing discipline, classroom management, and instruction are presented in the literature review portion of Section 2.

Problem Statement

The educational problem addressed in this study was a lack of empirically grounded evidence of the strategies used by a single urban school in the northeast region of the United States to decrease school discipline problems during the period of September 2013 through June 2014. Findings may be used to fill gaps in existing literature related to school discipline and classroom management issues.

The failure of teachers to maintain control of classroom behavior effectively is often a contributing factor to the low achievement of at-risk students and to the high number of referrals of the students for special education services(Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Harrell, Leavell, Van Tassel, & McKee, 2004; Lo & Cartledge, 2007; Oliver & Reschly, 2007). Infantino and Little (2005) suggested teachers spend disproportionately more time dealing with behavior problems that take from instruction and compromise learning for all students. Student

discipline problems are predictors of future failure in high school, delinquency, special

education referrals, alternative school placements, and incidents of school violence

(Meltzer, Biglan, & Rusby, 2001; Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2010; Skiba, 2010).

Discipline problems may also be connected to persistent academic failure, grade

retention, negative attitudes concerning school, and even greater dropout rates (Morrison,

Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Oppenheimer & Ziegler, 1988; Skiba & Peterson,

2003; Sprague & Walker, 2005; Walker & Sprague, 1999). Schools that have found

success in executing school-wide behavioral interventions and supports have witnessed

increases in overall attendance, student reports of a more optimistic and tranquil school

atmosphere, teacher reports of a more conducive work environment, increased

instruction, and a decrease in the number of behavioral disruptions (Ratcliff, Jones,

Costner, Savage-Davis, & Hunt, 2005; Rimm-Kaufmann, La Paro, Downer, & Pianta,

2005).

Populations affected by discipline issues include students, teachers, parents,

schools, and communities. Students are affected because behavioral interruptions take

away valuable learning. Every time instruction is interrupted, student learning is

diminished. One study showed students missed 5 minutes of instructional time and

learning when the teacher had to address a disruptive behavior (Fin, Fish & Scott, 2008;

Maurer, Sturges, Allen, Averette, & Lee, 2009). Teachers are affected as behavioral

issues not only need to be addressed, but the paper work, including referrals, takes

additional time that should be used instructing students. Teacher morale is affected when

support is limited from parents and administrators, and teacher attrition affects the

number of teachers leaving the profession (Cakmak, 2008; Stoughton, 2007). Parents are affected by possible loss of work having to attend additional conferences about student behavior problems and to return students to school after a suspension. Schools are affected when reports of discipline issues are submitted to district, county, and state levels, jeopardizing the school's safe school status, ability to reach AYP, and possible loss of funding. The community is affected as the discipline issues in the school spill out into the adjoining neighborhoods, increasing the potential for more dangerous situations to erupt such as increased street and gang violence, greater involvement of law enforcement, increased juvenile incarceration, possible mental health issues, disregard for community, personal/commercial property, and residents, and the potential for future adult infractions (Bucher & Manning, 2005; Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Project, 2000).

Students who are out of school for discipline issues may be without adult supervision because a guardian has to work thus creating a situation that could become perilous for the student and the community (Leach & Humphreys, 2007).

The local school setting was a Title 1 school located in an urban community in the southern part of the state of New Jersey. The school serviced approximately 600 students in prekindergarten (pre-K) to eighth grade including autistic and self-contained classes. Discipline problems in this school evidenced in administrative data and school-wide plan reports included but was not limited to insubordination, threats, fighting, bullying, disrupting instruction through loud outbursts and horse play, verbal abuse, defiance, and disrespect of teachers. The diversity of student population, cultures, and condoned or

acceptable behavior at home or in the community were also contributing factors. Several strategies were used by individual teachers and administrators to decrease these problems. The school-wide plan indicated a need to have strategies and procedures in place that would decrease discipline problems in order to meet state and federal mandates of the NCLB (2002) legislation. Conspicuously discipline was a local problem as it took away time designated to teach students. Less teaching time may result in poor student achievement, and poor student achievement may result in loss of funding to the local school and possibly school take over procedures.

Lack of empirical evidence on the decrease of discipline was a problem from a research perspective for several reasons. First, confirmation of changes that reportedly occurred was inadequate to affect sustainable increases in the desired behaviors of students; second, available data offered no clear guidance on how to continue decreasing discipline in local school despite some progress; third, educators were unable to purposely replicate the actions that resulted in decrease discipline. Finally, discipline problems might recur because of uncertainty of how results were achieved. This study was an investigation of the strategies used by school personnel of an urban K-8 school in the northeast region of the United States to decrease discipline problems. This qualitative case study explored how the local school addressed discipline issues. The data gathered from this study provided information relating to decreased discipline problems in an urban school setting in New Jersey.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions which are anchored in the aforementioned educational problem and related to the purpose of the study:

1. What types of student discipline problems existed in the school?

2. What strategies were developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems?

   a. Why were those strategies chosen?

   b. Who were the targets of the strategies?

   c. Who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies and what were their roles and responsibilities?

3. What were the outcomes of the strategies?

   a. Behavioral outcomes?

   b. Attributional outcomes?

   c. Decisions?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school in the northeastern part of the United States to decrease student discipline problems. The overarching goal of the study was to provide the local school with empirically grounded evidence that informs school practices and policies on student discipline issues and to contribute to the existing scholarship on school discipline and classroom management challenges.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underlies a research study even if the framework is not articulated (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Pickard, 2007). According to Smyth (2004), conceptual framework is described as a tool that researchers use to guide inquiry. Conceptual framework is thought to be the skeleton on which to build research. The purpose of the conceptual framework is to serve as a concept map for the researcher to aid with discovering pertinent information and data and not to predict what that data will be found to disclose (Hines, 2007; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950). Conceptual framework guides researchers to advance beyond descriptions of "what" to explanations of "why" or "how" (Vaughn, 2008).

The conceptual framework for this study was based upon a behaviorist view of learning accompanied by the social learning theory and the communities of practice theory. The social learning theory developed by Bandura has become possibly the most prominent and renowned theory of learning and development (Cherry, 2006; Sincero, 2011). Fundamentally, social learning has three core concepts. Learning through observation is the first core concept. Learning can take place just by watching. Second, internal mental states are a vital part of the process. Lastly, Bandura (1977) also realized and conceded that even though something has been learned changes in behavior may not be an end result. Even though the social learning theory embraces several of the fundamental concepts of what is considered the traditional learning theory, Bandura did not suppose direct reinforcement was the means for all types of learning (Cherry, 2013). In social learning theory, Bandura (1997) stated that behavior is learned from the

environment through the process of observational learning. Children observe the people around them behaving in a variety of ways (Eysenck, 2012). The famous "Bobo doll" experiment is noted in connection with the social learning theory. Social learning theory elucidates human behavior in terms of incessant give-and-take relations (Goodwin, 2009; Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2012).

Individuals who are observed are called *models* (McLeod, 2011). In society, students are surrounded by numerous influential models. The models include, but are not limited to, parents, siblings, and others within the household, characters on television, friends within their peer group, teachers at school, persons within their neighborhoods, and leaders within their communities (Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002). The models provide examples for students to observe, encode, and imitate what has been observed at a later time, whether the behavior is appropriate or not (Mcleod, 2011). Bandura (1997) noted that external, environmental reinforcement was not the only factor to influence learning and behavior. Bandura (as cited in Sincero, 2011) additionally described intrinsic reinforcement as a type of inner remuneration, such as pride, self-fulfillment, and a sense of achievement. This emphasis on internal thoughts and cognitions helps connect learning theories to cognitive developmental theories (Lave & Wenger, 2002). The social learning theory has sometimes been called a link between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it subsumes or encompasses attention, memory, and motivation. The theory is identified with and connected to Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, according to which social interaction and learning play a fundamental role in development, and Lave's (1990) situated learning, which also

emphasizes the significance and value of social learning as well as knowledge acquisition.

Communities of practice is a term that was first introduced by Lave and Wenger (2002) and refers to producing a mutual practice of members engaging in a collective process of learning (Printy, 2008; Smith, 2009; Wenger, 2007). Wenger (2007) described the term as groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Community members are continuously involved with collaborative ventures and ultimately the collaborative learning brings about practices that reflect the efforts. Wenger (1998) stated that practice is a process of experiencing the world and negotiating or constructing meaning out of participation. There are three dimensions of this relation between practice and community: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of ways of doing things. All stakeholders including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, reflect upon their practices, make decisions, implement instruction, and interact with peers. The practice of community also requires learning on the part of everyone involved. Collective learning evolves in learning practices which become instrumental in accomplishing the desired outcome of the community (Roberts, 2006).

The conceptual framework was appropriate for the study for the following reasons.

First, the framework provided the basis for investigating what strategies were developed, who was involved in the strategies process, and their roles and responsibility, and the outcomes of those strategies. A model that provides for the exploration of

multiple individuals and or groups of people allows the researcher and others to understand the roles individuals might play in the allocation of discipline in the research site (Denscombe, 2014).

Second, the framework provided a basis for examining the approaches and strategies used to decrease discipline problems. Theoretical perspectives offer a means for effective practice by providing a way to formulate discipline philosophy (Bushiest & Grebing, 1990; Darch & Kame'enui, 2004; Edwards, 2004). Additionally, these results will give teachers and administrators the opportunity to be cognizant of strategies used to decrease discipline problems (Graham, 2006; Kozol, 2005).

Operational Definitions

Operational definitions are technical terms specifically related to the study. The definitions are grounded in the literature and will contribute to the understanding or clarification throughout the investigation.

Actor is defined as one who takes part. Actor is also defined as a participant or subject of interest. Words used in a similar way to actor include but are limited to participant, interest group, and stakeholder (Spradley, 1980). The definition of a subject of interest was used for this study.

Attributional outcome is a term used to define to whom a strategy or policy can be attributed or credited to, or establishing a particular person as the creator of a work (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2005). The definition of to whom a strategy or policy can be attributed or credited will be used for this study.

Classroom management is a term used by educators to explain the procedure of making certain that classroom lessons run efficiently regardless of disruptive behaviors by students. The expression classroom management also denotes the determent of disruptive behavior; increases on-task time and reduces classroom disruptions (Graham & Oney Hall, 2006; Wong, 2004). Discipline concerns fall under this heading and are a major part of classroom management. For the purpose of this study, classroom management refers to the definition above of the prevention of disruptive behavior; increases in on-task time, and reduction in classroom disruptions. Classroom management does not guarantee effective instruction; however, classroom management will establish the environmental context that makes good instruction possible (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

Communities of practice according to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) are considered groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who expand their knowledge and expertise in a particular area by collaborating on a continuing basis. The groups participate in shared activities and deliberations, assist one another, and share information. The group may also build relationships that allow them to learn from each other to enhance their shared purpose (Wenger, 2007).

Discipline is a term that is used interchangeably by many teachers with classroom management (Marzano, 2005). Discipline is described as control achieved as a result of enforced obedience or order. Discipline can also mean a methodical or prescribed conduct or exemplar of behavior. The term has also been used to denote punishment that is the end result of not following the established rules. The intent of discipline is to

determine realistic limits which shield students and staff from potential harm teach students what is safe and what is not, and to produce an environment that is conducive to learning (Arum, 2003; Gaustad, 1992; Marzano, 2005).

Elementary school is considered grades pre-K through Grade 8 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). The aforementioned definition was used to define the boundary of the study and the population.

Disruptive behavior is off-task behaviors such as students talking to one another when they should be listening to a presentation, interrupting a speaker, being generally discourteous, clowning (posturing or play fighting), and acting out violently (Cangelosi, 2004; Marzano, 2005).

Outcomes are defined as the results of performance, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability across a varied or diverse range of sectors. Outcomes can be desired, academic, or anticipated (Duignan, 2009; Murray & Hughes, 2008). Reputational outcomes are overt expression of a collective image about an entity; behavioral outcomes are the desired performance expected.

Strategies are defined as approaches, actions, interactions, or methods utilized to achieve an objective or accomplish a task (Canter, 2010; Marzano, 2003).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is a limitation about the study that is resolutely not controlled and is assumed to be true (Best & Kahn, 2003; Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) posited, "Assumptions are so basic that, without them the research problem itself

could not exist" (p. 62). Three assumptions existed in the study. First, I assumed that all

data reported using the school database system were coded correctly with respect to

incident occurrences and that the discipline was implemented and recorded with fidelity.

Second, I expected all respondents to provide thoughtful, honest, and accurate responses

to interview questions as a result threats to validity may result in the study. The

respondents were assured that the responses were confidential. Thirdly, I assumed the

results would be meaningful and relevant to all stakeholders.

Limitations

Conditions which cannot be controlled and which signify potential weaknesses in

the research study, as well as threats to internal validity that may have been impossible to

avoid or minimize are considered limitations (Creswell, 2003; Pajares & Usher, 2007;

Patton, 2002; Walonick, 2005). The limitations for the study included a single site case

study, self- report data, small number of participants, and generalizability of the study.

An additional limitation that was discovered upon completion of the study was the

scheduling of interviews. Several conflicts occurred in setting up interview times with

participants. Flexibility was key in obtaining appointments to conduct the interviews.

Single site case study. The research was limited to a case study conducted at a

specified single location. The focus was only on one urban elementary school with grades

pre-K to Grade 8 in the northeast part of the United States, and the data gathered may

have been applicable only to this school or to schools of similar size, demographics, or

school using similar discipline strategies (Smith, 2006).

Self-report data. Self-report data must be reliable and not reflect what the participants perceive the researcher expects or what will ultimately reflect on their own abilities, knowledge, beliefs, or opinions (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Schacter, 1999). Limitations to self-report data documentation may include selective memory, telescoping, attrition, and exaggeration; therefore, care must be taken by the researcher to avoid biases. Selective memory is when participants remember or do not remember experiences or events that have occurred in the past. Telescoping is the act of recalling events that happen at one time as though they occurred at another time. Attribution is to credit positive events and outcomes to self and negative events and outcomes to eternal forces. Exaggeration is embellishing events as more significant that data actually suggests (Chan, 2009).

Small number of participants. The study may be subject to interpretation due to small number of participants. The small number of participants may be too small to represent the entire population of the study site. Because of the relatively small number of participants, individual opinions can take on greater weight than is appropriate (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The study participants were limited to teachers at the specified single site.

Generalizability of the study. The location in the study may not generalize to other schools. Therefore, generalizing the results to other schools beyond the local setting may be limited. The possibility, however, that the sample could have been generalized to schools with similar enrollment and student discipline data (Trochim, 2000).

Utility of the conceptual framework. The social learning theory describes may not completely explain contributing factors to discipline problems in the schools in the local setting (Bandura, 1986). The theory is limited in its ability to consider differences in individuals. The theory does not take into account the actual development changes (physical and mental) that occur as the child matures. The social learning theory also may not account for the strategies implemented to decrease the discipline in the school.

Additional limitations surfaced during the collection of data. Scheduling and rescheduling interviews for participants occurred due to unexpected work schedule changes. Also gaining access to documentary data from office personnel required several visits to coordinate a mutual time to review data at the local site office.

Scope

The scope addresses a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Hart, 2009; Yin, 2009). The scope of this study was to evaluate whether the school was able to decrease the amount of discipline problems. The study was about exploring the strategies an urban elementary school used to decrease discipline problems in the school. The study time frame was September 2013 through June 2014.The study was restricted to a small number of participants. Participants in the study were limited to teachers, counselors, and administrators who served at the local school and were involved in the school wide unified improvement committee.

Delimitations

This study was not about developing specific strategies to decrease discipline in all types of elementary and middle schools, settings, or geographical areas, neither to

compare best practices and strategies in decreasing discipline in schools. The focus of

study was not on the school district's approaches to improving discipline procedures or

techniques. Further, this study did not address staff development in regards to discipline

and classroom management. This study was about providing the local school with

empirically grounded evidence that informs school practices on student discipline issues.

The qualitative case study focused on an urban elementary school, pre-K to Grade 8, in

the northeast region of the United States. The study was bounded by the timeframe

September 2013 to June 2014. Key participants in the study were limited to personnel

who served at the local school and were involved in the school wide improvement

committee.

Significance of the Study

The study should provoke further discussion and awareness on the topic of

decreasing discipline issues in public school. The annual Gallup (2007) education polls

have continued to indicate discipline to be the nation's primary education concern.

Because of ongoing school reform movements such as the NCLB (2002) legislation,

superior expertise is needed to fill the research gap and to reform school discipline.

Developmental outcomes such as low child self-esteem, aggression, teen delinquency,

adult criminal behaviors, depression, and other social problems have been linked to

problems in how children have or have not been disciplined (Burnett, 2005; Socolar,

Savage, & Evans, 2007). The implications, then, of decreasing discipline cannot be

minimized.

Application to the Local Problem

Discipline is an area of primary concern in local schools (Department of Education, 2008; Warren, 2007). The importance of exploring whether or not discipline problems were decreased will assist schools, administrators, teachers, and counselors in making better informed decisions regarding discipline. The study provided the local school with empirically grounded evidence that informs school practices and policies on student discipline issues. The study was also significant to all stakeholders at the local school level where decreasing discipline and increasing instructional time is needed.

Professional Application

Educational institutions, professional development providers, teacher organizations, school and district administrators, as well as school counselors may benefit from the findings of the study and the contribution to existing research on school discipline, classroom management challenges, and evidenced-based strategies. The study will be significant to all stakeholders in providing professional development options in addressing the discipline issues. The study contributes to the existing scholarship on strategies to manage discipline in the classroom.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Walden University's belief is that positive social change is a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organization, institutions, cultures and societies, as well as improvement of human and social conditions (Walden,2006). Understanding school practices and policies on discipline issues will enable

administrators, teachers, and counselors to better serve students in order to produce

productive citizens in the school and community environment by addressing and

reforming educational systems at the institutional level. The National School Climate

Council (2009) stressed that a sustainable, positive school climate is one that fosters

youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying

life in a democratic society. The positive change will promote social change in students,

teachers, administrators, and the community.

Transition Statement

Section 1 provided a concise overview of the phenomenon and issues related to

discipline issues and its effects on classroom management, a literature introduction, and

the related research problem. Section 1 further included the research purpose of the case

study exploring what a single elementary school in New Jersey did to decrease discipline

in the school, the research questions, and operational definitions commonly used. In

Section 2, a review of the literature supporting the need for this specific study is

presented. A collection of empirical studies and professional sources addressing the

phenomenon was examined. Theoretical perspectives, related themes, and topics related

to discipline were addressed. Section 3 offers a broad yet detailed description of the

research design, inclusive of the methods and procedures that I used to obtain and

analyze the data, ethical considerations, and strategies to minimize bias and error. Section

4 includes the findings of the research, and Section 5 includes conclusions to the research

findings. Section 5 includes recommendations for action, recommendations for further

research, and personal reflections emanating from the research, and finally this study

addresses implications for promoting social change.

Section 2: Literature Review

Content and Organization of the Review

The focal point of the review included literature on factors that contributed to the issue of discipline in schools and the classroom, grounded evidence on strategies used to decrease discipline problems in schools, literature on reputedly ineffective strategies used to decrease discipline, literature on reputedly effective strategies used to decrease discipline, and literature on the conceptual framework. Factors that contribute to discipline problems are notably important to address because every discipline gap or problem exists due to varying situations and circumstances. Finally, the literature review included literature on the conceptual framework, literature on related methods, and literature on differing methodologies.

Strategy Used for Searching the Literature

Sources used to conduct the literature review were electronic research databases and library-based, which included but were not limited to the following: EBSCO host, ProQuest, Sage Journals Online, Google Scholar, ERIC (Educational Resource Center), and Education Week Online. The libraries at Walden University and Richard Stockton College of New Jersey provided peer-reviewed articles as well as current, well-acclaimed books on discipline, supervision, leadership, and assertive discipline in schools. Peer-reviewed journals were used to research literature related to discipline and classroom management. Secondary sources were found using the Internet search engine such as google scholar and chrome goggle as a final alternative to explore public network information about school discipline and management. The sources assisted in

understanding school discipline and classroom management from the perspective of public domains and included but were not limited to PowerPoint presentations, university websites, and government and public websites.

Several research terms, keywords, and descriptors that were relevant to this study were explored. Initially the following phrases were used: *school discipline, behavior problems in schools, disruptive behavior in schools, decreasing discipline in schools,* and *interruptions during instructional time*. Results did not yield an array of literature.

An additional search involving a combination of phrases including *elementary school discipline, behavior, challenging behaviors in schools, discipline strategies in public schools, appropriate discipline, discipline and instructional time, improving discipline in schools, childhood development, bullying, classroom management, discipline that works,* and *teachers and discipline* ensued. Other research terms explored were *inappropriate strategies, reputedly effective discipline strategies, reputedly ineffective discipline strategies, school discipline models, classroom disruptions and disciplinary practices, violence in schools, suspension, interventions, discipline that works, prevention-focused programs, positive and negative discipline, punishment and consequences, consequences for inappropriate behavior,* and *alternative education and discipline*. Additionally, Boolean phrases including *teacher retention, parental involvement, school administrators, and environmental factors* were searched along with *school discipline*.

Relationship to the Research Question

The purpose of this case study was to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used to decrease student discipline problems in an urban elementary school in the northeastern part of the United States. The research questions were developed to identify the types of student discipline problems that exist in the school, the strategies developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems, explore why those strategies were chosen, and explain the targets of the strategies. Additionally, the research questions identified who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies, what their roles and responsibilities were, and to explain the outcomes of the strategies used to decrease student discipline problems.

Literature on Theories Related to School Discipline

Many theories have been written on school discipline throughout the years. Behaviorist theory, introduced by Skinner (1968), suggested that acknowledging or recognizing appropriate behavior reinforces the behavior and that adult models need to be careful to model good and appropriate behavior consistently to children (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2009). When negative behavior is projected or even singled out, validity is given to the behavior, thus causing the child to receive attention and reinforcing the negative behavior. According to Skinner's behaviorist theory, students who demonstrate unacceptable behavior are actually looking for some form of attention. The adult disciplinarian should not acknowledge the child's poor behavior although it may increase in its intensity, according to Charles (2010), because the child will in due course recognize the behavior has not resulted in the desired response and abandon the negative

behavior. According to Charles (2010), children need positive reinforcement and constant reward to decrease negative behaviors and improve self-esteem. Many behaviorist theorists have claimed negative reinforcement, which is the opposite of positive reinforcement, causes children to react with the same behavior, which in time will impact social relationships on every level throughout their lifetime (Cameron & Shepphard, 2006; Charles, 2010; Thomas, 2005; Wheeler, 2010). Negative reinforcement may include but not be limited to corporal punishment, verbal altercations, harassment, intimidation, and bullying. For the theory of operant conditioning, Skinner further stated that the process does not require repeated efforts, but is instead an immediate reaction to a familiar stimulus.

With social learning theory, Bandura contended that the behavioral habits of children, both good and bad, are developed through observational learning and is referred to as imitation or modeling (Bandura, 1977; Ormrod, 2011; Thomas, 2005). In other words, children tend to be what it is they see others do (Ormrod, 2008; Thomas, 2005). Children will imitate the behaviors of those in a position of influence whether a parent, teacher, guardian, television character, or peer, often practicing what they observe to receive their individually desired results (Bandura, 1986; McLeod, 2011; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). The connector between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories could very well be the social learning theory.

The theory of behavior modification has been used almost everywhere in the educational field and applied to all aspects of human behavior (Graziano, 2008; Mittenberger, 2011; Reynolds, Dallery, Shroff, Patak, & Lerass, 2008; Saville & Zinn,

2009). Behavior modification refers to the use of reinforcement in order to shape the behavior of a student through analyzing and modifying (Mitttenberger, 2007; Walker, Shea, & Bauer, 2004). This theory requires reinforcement on a consistent basis by teachers whenever students exhibited appropriate behaviors including following the classroom rules (Martin & Pear, 2010; Mittenberg, 2011).

Glasser's (1998) reality therapy involves teachers helping students make positive choices by helping student understand the connection between their behavior and consequences that may follow. The process includes class meetings, an explanation of the class/school rules, and the use of plans and contracts. According to Sullo (2007), reality therapy is a method of counseling based on choice theory and is geared towards the participant taking control of their own behavior as well as enhances personal effectiveness. Reality therapy has shown success in many areas, including education, parenting, leadership, and management, conveying the message of accepting responsibility for one's own actions (Sullo, 2007). Reality therapy is simply based on the conviction that everyone is responsible for the things they choose to do and must govern themselves accordingly (Glasser, 1998; Sullo, 2007). Glasser defined responsibility as learning to choose behaviors that satisfy one's needs and, at the same time, do not deprive others of a chance to do the same.

Gossen (1996) pointed out that research studies have indicated that the effectiveness of punishments and rewards are unsuccessful in supporting "desirable behavior" because students are not prompted to consider their behavior. To a certain extent, rewards and punishments are responsible for poor behavior. With self-restitution

theory, students are motivated to take a look back at behaviors and determine what the

contributing factors were to the behavior being exhibited in the first place (Gossen,

1996). Overall, the purpose is for students work to develop and implement a new more

acceptable way of responding that is more responsible. Gossen suggested self-restitution

theory involves regular reflection on a student's personal behavior, helps students learn to

benefit from mistakes, and assists students in becoming better able to conduct themselves

in accord with their needs and inner sense of morality (Charles, 2011; Gossen, 1996).

   The communities of practice theory introduced by Wenger and Lave deals with a

shared practice of members of a group engaging in a collective process of learning

(Smith, 2009; Wenger, 2007). Wenger (2007) described the theory as groups of people

who share a concern or zeal for something they do and learn how to do it better through

regular interaction. The theory was developed by considering work based and other

informal learning situations. Wegner (2007) further stated that community members are

involved constantly with collaborative projects and over time the collaborative learning

results in practices that reflect the efforts. All stakeholders, including but not limited to

teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and counselors, reflect upon their practices,

make decisions, implement instruction, and interact with peers (Boylan, 2005; Schmoker,

2006; Wenger, 2007). Collective learning evolves in learning practices that become

instrumental in accomplishing the desired outcome of the community (DuFour, Eaker, &

DuFour, 2008; Schmoker, 2006).

   There are many theories that have emerged on the subject of school discipline and

extensive work has been adding to the known knowledge about human behavior and

discipline. Theories that relate to school discipline are vital to the study because they offer a means for effective practice by providing a way to formulate discipline philosophy. Additionally, the theories may be essential in explaining participant perceptions of the factors influencing discipline.

Discipline problems in many urban public schools have generated the need for intervention and prevention-focused programs. These programs are geared toward improving character and moral development, promoting exemplary social skills, reducing antisocial behaviors, and strengthening academic competencies (Garner & Garner, 2008; Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001). Sergiovanni (2005) asserted that poor student discipline results in little learning, meaning if there is no control in the school or classroom students will have difficulty learning (Martin & MacNeil, 2007). School administrators and teachers must understand the exclusivity of their school discipline issues and become aware of the available resources to decrease the behavioral problem in the school (American Psychology Association, 2007; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; Martin & MacNeil, 2007). It is important to note that no occasions of inappropriate behavior are the same at every school and leaders such as teachers, administrators, counselors, and others must search and implement appropriate successful strategies for their specific school environment.

A school discipline plan must conform to state and federal statutes and to district policy. State education boards are responsible for detailing school discipline rules (U.S. Legal, Incorporated, 2010). The consequences of violating school rules are detailed and explained in writing through school newsletters, student handbooks, and school websites

and verbally communicated through student assemblies, parent meetings, conferences, and classroom meetings so that all staff, students, and parents have a clear understanding of the processes. U. S. Legal, Incorporated (2010), reported that schools in general refrain from corporal punishment because of legal ramifications and student safety considerations. Instead, many now attempt to enforce a zero tolerance policy through counseling, detention, suspension, or expulsion (U. S. Legal, Incorporated 2010). The need and capabilities of schools differ. Educational institutions implement a variety of practices intended to prevent and reduce inappropriate student behaviors (Peterson, Larson, & Skiba, 2001). Kessor (2005) argued discipline not only requires correcting students and setting appropriate consequences for misbehavior; but teachers and administrators must be aware of and part of the school life on a consistent basis including significant participation in both instructional and non-instructional times. These opportunities include playground activities, hallway monitoring, lunch times, dismissal and non instructional interactions.

One of the most important aspects of education is to provide an atmosphere conducive to ensuring academic skills are taught (Zimmerman, 1995). Two major objectives Moles (1989) suggested pertaining to school discipline are to ensure the safety of staff and students, and construct an atmosphere where learning is foremost. Moles (1989) further indicated that serious student misconduct involving violent or criminal behavior defeats these goals and often makes headlines. However, the most common discipline problems involve noncriminal student behavior. Noncriminal student behavior

is subject to the disciplinary and enforcement policies of each school (Arcia, 2006; Arum, 2003; Moles, 1989).

School discipline is an area of much concern in the country given the recent headlines concerning school violence and poor academic achievement. Many schools and school districts have major issues with classroom management and disruptive behavior in their educational halls. Where disruptive behavior was believed to be largely a problem in inner city schools, research on classroom management suggests that disruptive behavior has now spread into the suburbs, even into posh schools (Charles, 2011; Charles & Senter, 2005). Until stability and control are established in school and classrooms, misbehavior and inappropriate behaviors will continue to disrupt the learning community and prevent teachers from teaching and students from learning (Rafferty, 2007). Managing student behavior is of great concern and a laborious enterprise for prospective teachers (McKinney, Campbell-Whately, & Kea, 2005). Failure to create conducive learning environments may interfere with learning, divert administrative time and also contribute to teacher burnout causing teachers to leave as early as their first or second year of teaching (Byrne, 1999; Cangelosi, 2000; Kendziora & Osher, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). According to the National Commission for Teaching America's Future (2002), 50% of urban teachers leave the profession within the first five year citing management and behavior problems as an influencing factor and the number overall according to the American Psychological Association is 30% of teachers that leave in the same time period due to student discipline issues (Hong, 2010). Therefore, having classroom management skills that are highly effective to maximize teaching time is

imperative. To relate content effectively, classrooms must be well managed; consequently, curriculum preparation and behavior management have a close relationship (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Johnson, Rice, Edgington, & Williams, 2005; Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Crnobori, 2010).

Because of the ever-increasing demand by the public, communities, and even the nation to increase students' academic achievement, especially in the areas of reading, math, and the sciences, greater emphasis is being placed on our schools to meet the new and increased academic standards of our times. Ineffective classroom management impedes this goal.

Not only has achievement decreased but the disruptions in the classrooms and schools have been on the rise. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001) reported that there has been a steady increase in the amount of students exhibiting inappropriate aggressive behaviors in the nation's schools which has compounded the problem of unsafe schools. Reports further indicate that over half of school age children do not think that they are safe while at school and that many parents have the same perception that their children are unsafe school and in surrounding neighborhoods (Rose & Gallup, 2006; 2007). The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) report suggested that many students attempt to stay home from school because they are afraid something will happen to them in school. When there is effective classroom management strategies and effective academic instruction, schools can attain or produce both academic gain and prepare student for socialization into the community, however, failure to deal

effectively with behavior will eventually result in negative individual, school, and community outcomes (Conoley & Goldstein, 2004; Jones & Jones, 2007; Wong, 2009)).

Research by Canter (2009), Marzano (2007), and Wong (2009) has shown that teachers who take control of the classroom environment set the tone to assist students in maximizing academic achievement. Marzano (2007) also argued that students are unproductive and cannot learn in a classroom that is chaotic and poorly managed. Consequently, teachers need be mindful to make sure rules are clearly relayed, that consequences are consistent and appropriate to the offence, and that rewards are given fittingly.

Effective management begins when school commences and is consistently and continuously practiced throughout the entire school year. Evertson and Emmer (2008) suggested that a teacher who is in control of the classroom, is one who keeps students actively involved in the learning process from the moment students arrive until the closing bell of the day. Instructional techniques, classroom arrangement, and classroom rules and procedures are extremely important components of effective classroom management therefore must be well thought out and mutually supportive. Wong and Wong (2009) agreed if effective management is instituted the first day of school and maintained, time instructional time will not be wasted attempting to gain control. Wong, and Wong, (2009) further stated effective teachers maintain well-ordered environments, positive academic expectations, use "proven research-based practices" as well as "incorporate the successful practices of other effective teachers into their own classrooms" (p.10). Dr. Kantorski (2005) avowed that in order to be successful in the

classroom setting the teacher needs to create and maintain an environment in which positive work will result in positive outcomes. Good and Brophy (2011) suggested the effective classroom managers (teachers) able to take full advantage of instructional time and effectively engaging students and are able to avert potential disruptions.

Researchers agree effective classroom teachers share several important qualities such as flexibility, consistency, patience, and control (Wong, 2007; Ellis, 1990). There must be behavior problem analysis with teachers' and administrators' careful examination of personal beliefs and values (Kauffman, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, Storm, Sawyer, Pianta, & LaParo, 2006). Teachers, according to Feldman (2003), establish specific rules for classroom behavior, share the rules with students early, plainly, and recurrently, emphasize the rules as needed, rehearse the rules regularly, reward good student behavior, and with consistency apply consequences for misbehavior. Marshall explained that classroom management is improved when procedures taught to and modeled for students, practiced with students, and, when the rules are regularly (Marshall, 2003).

Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, Foseid, and Marzano (2008) argued that successful teacher-student relationships generally show evidence of appropriate levels of authority; exhibiting appropriate levels of support; and knowledge of the students who may be at risk; and that they are in no way connected to the personality of the teacher or the perception of the teacher being the student's buddy. For the highly challenging behaviors of students the teacher must endeavor to develop an alternative plan that will prove to be successful. Canter and Canter (2010) articulated that an individualized behavior plan

should be created and implemented for challenging students. This means giving the student a chance to be a part of the plan development in order to have an understanding of exactly what is expected. Canter and Canter (2010) further suggested that when necessary adjustments must be made to the plan to accommodate specific students.

Consideration should thus be given to the plethora of cultures and nationalities and even religious group served. Brown (2005) suggested that being able to win the trust, collaboration, and cooperation of students in urban classrooms involves creating an atmosphere where teachers address the social, emotional, cognitive, cultural and ethnic needs. A study conducted by Brown (2002) of 13 teachers from grades K-12 concluded that these teachers created caring classroom communities by showing a genuine interest in each student; gained student cooperation by being assertive through the use of explicitly stated expectations for appropriate student behavior and academic growth; and demonstrated mutual respect for students through the techniques that provide students with opportunities for academic success (Brown, 2002). Babkie's (2006) theory suggested that teachers and administrators need to be proactive not reactive concerning student behavior. This will help set the stage in the school as well as the classroom to prevent disruption and management problems.

Blum (2005) argued when everyone assumes responsibility to resolve an issue a greater effort is expended for success. Blum's (2005) research also discovered that student success is probable if they perceive connectedness to the school. School connection is described as the belief of students that teachers, counselors, and

administrators in the school are concerned about their successful learning, as well as, their well-being as individuals.

Note that rules are apt to be successful as everyone invests in the goal and wholeheartedly obligate themselves to adhere. Rubin (2004) suggested that communities that enjoy a safe school learn about leadership, collaboration, and how the process of change operates. Professional development will enable teachers, other staff, and communities to work together to improve school conditions and share classroom management research as well a specific techniques. A school-wide compact or contract requires the commitment from the school generally. A definition of a school compact is a written contract involving the teacher and parent and is founded on the supposition the as the home and the school collaborates student's behavior and academic success will improve (Public Education Network, 2002). A compact which outlines specific responsibilities of all persons involved as well as the terms of behavior management is signed by all when school begins in the fall and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the compact is implemented correctly.

Kafele (2004) suggested that teachers be involved in continuing education, explore research data available, and attend workshops on multiple intelligences, constructivist learning and differentiated instruction to hone skills, stay abreast of developing strategies, in order to remain proactive in minimizing behavioral problems. Teachers should be open to new ideas that will decrease inappropriate behaviors and strive to be consistent with individual students rather than using a blanket list of consequences on all students, keeping in mind students are individuals (Alderman, 2001;

Canter, 2010; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). This will show sensitivity on the part of the teacher while still having structure in the classroom.

Skiba and Rausch (2006) discovered that when inappropriate behavior is observed as a persistent on-going issue, many educators may also struggle with concerns such as low standardized test scores. Ineffective classroom management has been long considered a factor in academic achievement by teachers, principals, and districts. Noguera (2008) stated that ineffective classroom management or misbehavior may also create difficulties in providing high-quality teaching and learning opportunities. It is difficult to teach when disruptions are occurring constantly throughout the day in the classroom. Tidwell, Fannery, and Lewis-Palmer (2003) stated disruptive and dangerous behaviors affect all students and staff. Therefore it is imperative that effective classroom management be established and maintained in order to promote peace and harmony, develop better citizens of the community and increase instructional time.

Strengths and Limitations of the Literature

Strengths of the literature included dynamics that were specific to the issue of discipline and related to this study. The existing concerns in the literature are the need to meet the challenges posed by the NCLB (2002) legislation which mandates a safe environment for both students and teachers, and the idea that students need an environment that is conducive to learning in order to achieve. Many ways have been explored to decrease the problems of discipline that exists in our nations' schools in the literature review. A number of behavior management strategies used to decrease discipline problems were discovered in the literature review as well. Additionally, many

theories that have emerged on the subject of school discipline and extensive work about human behavior and discipline were revealed in the literature review. Literature is limited in the field of explaining the factors that may contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a behavior management strategy. There exist gaps in the literature of empirically grounded evidence that informs school practices and policies on discipline. Much of the literature examined specific groups, or participants. Literature involving combined elementary and middle school is limited. Qualitative studies that include perception of teachers, administrators, and students exist however are limited resulting in the need for additional qualitative research to be conducted (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2010). Because of the gaps in the existing literature on school discipline and the strategies used to narrow the discipline gap this study will enhance existing knowledge and inform policy and practice in order to narrow the present discipline gap in the school setting.

Literature on Reputedly Ineffective Strategies

The difference between classrooms that work efficiently and classrooms that operate poorly is how things are executed. Marshall (2006) stated effective management is not noticed when it is working correctly, however when the classroom is not, the deficit is obvious. The National Association of School Psychologist (2002) argued that punishment based discipline is ineffective and will not decrease or improve discipline problems in school, nor will the overall climate or school safety be improved.

Research demonstrates that suspension, expulsion, and other punitive consequences are not the resolution or cure all to student behaviors that are considered unsafe and/or disruptive and although suspension and expulsion are an inescapable

consequence depending upon the circumstances, the methods have not a lasting effect in managing inappropriate behavior ("Are Zero Tolerance Policies", 2008; Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Students who are creating the unsafe conditions do not decrease or change their inappropriate behavior when barred from appropriate school settings; on the contrary, students tend to be even more apt to increase the inappropriate behavior. These methods also place students at risk of falling behind or even dropping out of school altogether (Butterfield, Muse, & Anderson, 1996; Cornell, Dewey, & Mayer, M., 2010; Skiba & Rausch, 2004). Strategies such as *negative discipline, aversive intervention, the authoritative approach, the permissive approach, punitive techniques, replacement techniques,* and countless other strategies are used in school districts across the country. However for the purpose of time and this study only a few will be highlighted which include the following: Zero Tolerance, *Out of School Suspension,* and *Corporal Punishment.*

Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance is the one the leading school discipline policy practiced in our country as well as the most rigorously scrutinized (Advancement Project, 2010; Boccanfuso & Kuhfeld, 2011; Browne-Dianis, 2011; Dinkes, Kemp, & Blum, 2009). Initially Zero tolerance was developed, designed, and implemented to prevent guns and illegal drugs from gaining access to the school environment (Skiba, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). However, zero tolerance policies have taken on an umbrella effect and currently envelop many more areas in school systems. Zero tolerance policy apportions precise punishments to specific violations of school rules, regardless of the situation or

context of the behavior (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Skiba, 2000; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Zero tolerance includes automatic suspension or even expulsion for misbehaviors including violations such as bringing a toy water gun to school, using a rubber band to shoot paper clips, or playfully pointing a finger, a pencil, or connected cubes in the shape of a gun at a fellow student in a harmless game of good guys versus bad guys on the playground at school.

Years ago the above behaviors would have had minor chastisement and consequences in the form of a detention, a firm warning from the teacher, a visit to the office of the counselor, a meeting with the principal, and or a call to a parent, however, with the implementation of Zero Tolerance a student would be suspended or even expelled (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2006; American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Cornell, 2006; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Zero tolerance policies are consequently unproductive, do not significantly improve or enhance school safety, and are linked to a variety of potentially negative consequences, including a greater school dropout rate, inequitable application of school discipline and possible increase in discipline problems (Canter &Wright, 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Zero tolerance policies may affect students of color such as African Americans, Hispanics, and students with disabilities to a greater extent than other students, and studies have shown that students of color and physically challenged students comprise a disproportionately greater proportion of expulsions and suspensions (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Garner & Garner, 2008; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; U. S. Dept. of Education, 2012). Canter and Wright (2005) further stated that discipline

practices that limit admission to appropriate educational instruction often intensifies the troubles of physically challenged students, increasing the likelihood graduation from school will be not occur.

Out of School Suspension

Out of School Suspension evolved in the 1960's as a strategy to reduce student inappropriate behavior and continues to be used today throughout the United States (Adams, 2000; Garner & Garner, 2008). Researchers began to express concern for students being removed from the general education classroom because of suspension, arguing that it only resulted in increased inappropriate behavior actually failed to address the students' behaviors at all (Fenning & Rose, 2008; Hochman & Worner, 1987; Sauter, 2001). In fact, study outcomes regarding school suspension provided data revealing students who were suspended from schools run the risk of becoming repeat offenders and suffer the same consequence of more suspensions over time (Ambrose & Gibson, 1995; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Flanagan, 2007; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010). It is further argued that out of school suspension is frequently misapplied, unfairly used against minorities, ineffective at producing improved future behavior, does not solve the underlying problem, and can be linked to in some cases entrance to prison in later years (Bloomberg, 2004; Fenning & Rose, 2008; Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, & Gately, 2004; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003; Verdugo, 2002). Out-of-school suspension like zero tolerance is often used as a consequence for offences that are seemingly minimal even though the purpose for which it was created was to deal with major violations of school policies and more severe inappropriate

behaviors (Amuso, 2007; Dupper & Dingus, 2008). Notwithstanding the reports that suggest out-of-school suspension's ineffectiveness, this strategy continues to one of the most widely exercised in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the country (Allman & Slate, 2011; Costenbader & Markson, 1997; Morrison & Skiba, 2001; Sauter, 2001; Skiba, 2002).

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment has been in existence since colonial days (Zolotor, Theodore, Runyan, Chang, & Laskey, 2011). People of the United States permitted corporal punishment in the school in order to discipline the students using physical force such as paddling students on the buttocks with an apparatus like a wooden paddle or belt. Corporal punishment also includes smacking, slapping, pulling hair, spanking, and any other type of physical punishment inflicted upon students (American Academy of Pediatric 2010; Center for Effective Discipline, 2005; Wong, 2011; Zolotor, Theodore, Runyan, Chang, & Laskey, 2011) Disciplinarians were expected to use reasonable restraint. Corporal punishment was challenged after a supreme court case in 1997 was filed even though the case was loss. Fourteen states had stopped the practice of corporal punishment by 1989, and to date the number of states that do not permit corporal punishment is only 29 states (Center for Effective Discipline, 2010; Phillips, 2012).

The American Bar Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Education Association along with about forty other organizations in the United States have publicly denounced corporal punishment as a means of discipline in public schools and regard the practice as ineffective and further believe the procedure of

corporal punishment is believed to do more harm to the children that are subjected to the

practice than good (McCarthy, 2005; Paolucci & Violato, 2004; Rhodes, 2011). Child

abuse, aggression, delinquent and antisocial behavior, moral internalization, has all been

associated with corporal punishment (Goddard & Saunders, 2010; Mitchell, 2010;

Shmueli, 2010). The practice is ineffective because corporal punishment incorporates

violence in order to curb inappropriate behavior, causes embarrassment to students,

disengages student learning, instills fear in some cases, and could potentially cause

physical and or psychological harm (Coleman, Dodge, & Campbell, 2010; Yaworski,

2012; Zamani & Farmer, 2009).

Literature on Reputedly Effective Strategies

Effective models or strategies have integrated an array of strategies structured in

multilevel process to effect change in school discipline (Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, &

Gately, 2004; Sherrod, Getch, & Siomek-Daigle, 2010). Newer strategies enforce student

learning while "preserving student dignity and fostering student-teacher relationships"

(Gaines & Menlove, 2003, p.2). The following are a few effective strategies. There are a

myriad of strategies considered effective in decreasing discipline including but not

limited to *School Wide Behavior Management System model (SWBMS)*, *First Things*

First (FTF), *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWBIS), Positive*

Discipline, Assertive Discipline, Kounin Model of Discipline, Responsive Classroom

Discipline Model, The Conscious Discipline Model, and the *Discipline with Dignity*

Model. School Wide Behavior management System model focuses on prevention,

intervention, and correction to avoid escalation to serious infractions system while

supporting students, parents, and staff (Fitzsimmons, 2011). *First Things First* (FTF) (2009), is an evidence-based school-wide program that focuses on improved behavioral and academic performance through small learning communities (Connell, Klem, Lacher, Leiderman, Moore, & Deci, 2009). *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* also identified the initials PBIS is a systems approach that is used to produce a research-based school-wide discipline systems with the goal of improving the schools ability to educate all children mainly through prevention of discipline problems in the first place (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). *Positive Discipline* is a discipline system which does not penalize students but focuses on positive behaviors instead of negative ones.

Canter's *Assertive Discipline* Model is a structured system with an emphasis on helping educators to execute organized, teacher-in-charge environments (Malmgren, Trezek, & Paul, 2005). The *Kounin Model of Discipline* is based on maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning through keeping students engaged to reduce behaviour problems (Kounin & Obradovic, 1968). *Responsive Classroom Discipline Model* (Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, Curby, Baroody, Merritt, Abry, Ko, & Thomas, 2012), looks at discipline as an opportunity to learn according to Charney (2002), focusing on empathy and structure and using a social curriculum process in the classroom. *The Conscious Discipline Model* is an evidence-based all-inclusive self-regulation program that incorporates social-emotional learning and discipline, a national model for character education (Bailey, 2011). *Discipline with Dignity* a model that focuses on accountability instead of blame. There are many more strategies used by countless schools however, in the interest of time only a few selected strategies *Character Education, Positive Behavior*

Support, *Collaborative Problem Solving Model (CPS),* and *In-School Suspension (ISS)* will be highlighted and discussed in the study.

Character Education

Character Education occasionally referred to as moral education is a program geared towards developing moral character in students (Character Education Partnership, 2010). The outcome of the program is to use moral decision making to help schools create safe learning environments, prevent victimization and peer bullying, decrease discipline problems, minimize or eliminate cheating, promote ethical development, and produce public-spirited citizens (O'Connell, 2007; Thorson, 2005; U.S. DoE, 2006:). Character Education covers moral and ethical values for instance respect fairness, caring responsibility, trustworthiness, and citizenship. Character Education exhibits the manifestation of values such as behavior, reasoning, and emotions and promotes caring and good role models (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Brochett, Katulak, Kremenitzer, Alster, & Caruso, 2008).

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Positive behavior support is one proactive strategy that addresses behavior problems across multiple settings (Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, Sailor, Anderson, Albin, Koegel, & Fox, 2002). Sugai and Homer (2006) have described PBS as "the integration of values outcomes, behavioral and biomedical science, empirically validated procedures, and systems change to enhance or increase quality of life and minimize or prevent problem behaviors" (p246). Positive Behavior Support commonly referred to as PBS, includes a broad range of both systemic and individualized strategies

that include but are not limited to managed classrooms and other school areas consequently creating a positive school climate (Frey, Lingo, & Nelson, 2008). PBS teaches and acknowledges appropriate behaviors systematically, tends to be proactive rather than reactive, intentionally works to create positive, flexible environments based on the review of data, and uses self-management. The goal of the program is to improve the school climate/environment, reduce referrals, and increase student achievement.

Collaborative Problem Solving Model (CPS)

The Collaborative Problem Solving Model (Greene, 2008), known also as CPS shows administrators and teachers how to recognize the true factors underlying difficult behavior and teaches children the skills needed to maintain self-control in increments they can handle. The children prevail over their hindrances; the frustration of teachers, parents, and classmates diminishes; and the well-being and learning of all students are enhanced. Greene (2008) argued that even with challenging children, rewards and punitive 'consequences' can and should be replaced with collaborative problem-solving. The Collaborative Problem solving model has been implemented and highly successful not only in thousands of households, but also in dozens of in-patient psychiatric units, residential facilities, systems of juvenile detention, and general education and special education school settings (Greene, 2008).

In-School Suspension (ISS)

In-school suspension arose as schools became increasingly frustrated the by discipline design of out-of school Suspension. It was thought that a model that was more rehabilitative and offered what is considered positive support for students would be more

effective (Sanders, 2001). ISS a term commonly used for in-school suspension is a
disciplinary action that keeps students in a school classroom type environment which
allows schools to punish inappropriate behaviors and to intervene in a positive manner
(Bloomberg, 2004; Verdugo, 2002). The rationale for ISS is to decrease the number of
out-of-school suspension, minimize potential outside influences that out-of school
suspension might create, provides students the opportunity to continue to receive
academic lessons through teacher assigned work, and allows students to receive
counseling to help change their inappropriate behaviors. Effective programs must include
a structured environment, supervision, consequences that are defined and clear,
modification of behavior, and consistency (Morris & Howard, 2003).

Justification and Utility of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study is based upon a behaviorist view of
learning accompanied by the social learning theory and the communities of practice
theory. The framework is appropriate because it provides the basis for investigating what
strategies were developed, who was involved in the process as well as the roles and
responsibilities of individuals, and the outcomes of the strategies. Boylan (2004) said that
Communities of practice does offer powerful analytical and research tools to understand
classroom interactions, learning and identity formation. The framework also provides a
basis for examining the approaches and strategies use to decrease discipline in the
research site.

Literature Related to Methods

Researchers must choose carefully the research methods that best suits the phenomenon being examined, remembering to keep in mind the research questions, collection of data, and the analysis of the data (Yin, 2009). The quantitative research method collects data, performs tests, and confirms a hypothesis. The quantitative method is often referred to as the cause and effect method, involves closed end questions or surveys, and uses numbers and statistics to make predictions (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Nardi, 2002; Vogt, 2006). Many studies on discipline have used the quantitative method of research in order to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Qualitative methods of research are generally used to explore and understand and interpret social interaction and differ from quantitative methods (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). The form of data collection for qualitative research may include interviews, open-ended questions/surveys, participant observation, and reflections. The qualitative research method of a case study is to gain a detailed understanding of the processes involved within a setting, but this can involve studying a single or multiple cases and numerous levels of analysis (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) further suggested case studies are appropriate when investigating real life context. A case study may investigate an individual, a program, an organization, an institution, or an activity (Creswell, 2007).

The intrinsic case study approach allows the researcher to acquire awareness of a particular and/or specific case of interest by exploring the process within the given setting which is a particular elementary school. The intrinsic case study helps the researcher understand the phenomenon better through exploration and adds strength to what is

already known; however, does not build theory. Data collected in case study is generally

qualitative and can include items such as interviews, documents, observations, and

artifacts. The intrinsic case study approach will be used for this case study as to gain a

better understanding of the particular study. The researcher's purpose is to explore and

understand the decrease in discipline happening over a limited period, at a specified

location, with a limited number of participants therefore case study is appropriate for the

study. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), case study results should not be influenced by

researchers' perceptions which could affect the investigation of potential outcomes by

researcher bias. Since a case study is one of the methodologies used most often for

qualitative research, the research design utilizes a number of methods to collect data,

which includes interviews, documentary analysis, and observation.

The combination and the balance between these methods are largely determined

by the resources available and the disciplinary and professional tradition in which the

case is conducted suggested Somekh & Lewin, (2005) and Waldham, (2009). The

interview is a common method used in research to collect data. Interviews can be

structured meaning controlled, semi-structured meaning having little flexibility, or even

amorphous relating to unstructured. Each reveals insight into a participant's perception of

the issue being explored as well as any explanation or aspiration (Punch, 1998;

Silverman, 2009). Interviews are also an in-road to realities and suggestions participants

might share. Another method used in research is document analysis. School

documentation is very important and therefore can be used to explore changes over a

period of time. Documents such as minutes to meetings, referral forms, incident reports,

emails, and letters form critical components of inquiry since the documents may be studied or analyzed to reveal changes whether positive or negative (Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Somekh & Lewin,2011). Creswell (2007) said that documents are considered a priceless source of information which has the potential to save a research valuable time and resources.

<div align="center">**Literature Related to Differing Methodologies**</div>

Many different methodologies are available for conducting qualitative studies on the subject of decreasing discipline including but not limited to ethnography, ethno methodology, field study, participant observation oral history, phenomenology, case study, investigative journalism, connoisseurship, criticism, nonparticipant observation, and natural history (Scholz & Teitje, 2002; Somekh & Lewin, 2011; Wooton, 2009; Yin, 2009). Five qualitative tradition types that are most commonly used in research are briefly discussed here including grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. Creswell (2007) suggested that grounded theory is a method used to develop a theory for a particular phenomenon and generally uses a large number of people who have experienced the given phenomenon to develop a theory that is not already in existence (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, & Stauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). On the other hand a narrative study is better suited for recording a series of event or recounting a specific event or life based upon an anecdote and is not suitable for this study. Ethnography is a type of research method that explores a designated group for instance an ethnic group, or the baby population at an identified location, or even teachers at a school (Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott, 2008). Phenomenology seeks to explore,

explicate, and analyze the significance of individual lived events, including how an event was perceived, portrayed, described, deciphered, and discussed with other people. The tradition involves in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The study is not to understand the lived experiences of participants; therefore, as theory may be useful phenomenology is therefore deemed not related for the study. Lastly, a case study is a study within a bounded framework that has limitations in space and time and might examine a specific phenomenon, i.e., a certain person, program, school, or district (Creswell, 2003). A Case study is used to develop an in-depth analysis of a single case. The researcher's purpose is to explore and understand the strategies used to affect a decrease in discipline happening over a limited period, at a specified location, with a limited number of participants; therefore case study is appropriate for the study.

Summary

The literature related to this topic signifies school discipline is a major concern for citizens, parents, and educators (Bushaw & McNee, 2009; Rose & Gallup 2008; Public Agenda, 2004). In order for students to reach their maximum potential there needs to be order in the classroom. Whether schools elect the use of punishment or positive reinforcement, the primary goal of school discipline is one and the same: encourage student compliance to rules and adult authority. The NCLB (2002) legislation is requiring that school provide safe environments in which students can learn and teachers can teach and are therefore making school districts more accountable for the development and implementation of effective school discipline plans and policies. Further study continues

to demonstrate the strong relationship or connection between teachers' classroom management skills, student discipline, and student achievement; therefore, further studies are important to assist developers in creating conditions and environments that are safe and conducive to maximum learning for students. The following section will explain the research methodology employed in the study including details about the research design, setting and sample, data collection process, and data analysis procedures.

Section 3: Research Method

Section 3 discusses the design and methodology for implementing the study. The design includes the selection of and rationale for the research design and a description of the research questions and sub questions. The section also identifies the context of the study, measures for ethical protection of participants, procedures for gaining access to participants, the role of the researcher, criteria for selecting of participants, data collection procedures, the data analysis strategies, procedures for discrepant cases, and methods of validity and trustworthiness.

A qualitative research design was used to implement the study for a few reasons. First, qualitative research design required a small number of participants consenting to share experiences, used subjective information, and was not limited to rigid definable variables (Maxwell, 2012; Somekh & Lewin, 2011). Second, qualitative research allows for the possibility of intimately examining the source of the information and ascertaining the personal feelings and beliefs of the participants. Finally, qualitative design research was used because a statistical analysis did not suit the problem being researched (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2012).

More specifically, within the qualitative design, a case study tradition was selected to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used to decrease discipline issues at an elementary school in the northeast. The case study was conducted to provide the local school with empirically grounded evidence that informs schools practices and policies on student discipline issues.

Selection of and Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Tradition

An intrinsic case study was selected for the research study. The purpose of a case study is to gain a detailed understanding of the processes involved within a setting, but this can involve studying a single or multiple cases and numerous levels of analysis (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) further suggested case studies are appropriate when investigating real life context. A case study may investigate an individual, a program, an organization, an institution, or an activity (Creswell, 2007). Baxter and Jack (2008), Creswell (2007), and Stake (2010) identified several types of case studies including intrinsic, instrumental, and collective.

- *Intrinsic* – geared towards understanding a specific case as the case itself is of interest. A case may be of interest because it has particular features or because it is ordinary.

- *Instrumental* – a case focused on giving insight on an issue or to narrow down a theory. Instrumental case studies understand the complexities of the case are less important to understanding something else.

- *Collective* - a number of cases are studies jointly in order to understand a phenomenon, population or general condition. Often referred to as a multiple-case study.

The intrinsic case study approach allows the researcher to acquire awareness of a particular and/or specific case of interest by exploring the process within the given setting, which is a particular elementary school. The researcher's purpose is to explore and understand the decrease in discipline happening over a limited period, at specified

location, with a limited number of participants. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), case study results should not be influenced by researchers' perceptions that could affect the investigation of potential outcomes by researcher bias. A case study is a study within a bounded framework that has limitations in space and time and might examine specifics such as a certain person, program, school, or district (Creswell, 2003).

Because a case study is one of the methodologies used most often for qualitative research, the research design utilizes a number of methods to collect data, which includes interviews, documentary analysis, and observation. The combination and the balance between these methods are largely determined by the resources available and the disciplinary and professional tradition in which the case is conducted (Bridget & Cathie, 2005; Waldham, 2009). The interview is a common method used in research to collect data. Interviews can be structured meaning controlled, semi-structured meaning having little flexibility, or even amorphous relating to unstructured (Maxwell, 2012; Silverman, 2004). Each reveals insight into a participant's perception of the issue being explored as well as any explanation or aspiration (Punch, 1998; Silverman, 2004). Interviews are also an in-road to realities and suggestions participants might share.

Another method used in research is document analysis. School documentation is very important and therefore can be used to explore changes over time. Documents such as minutes to meetings, referral forms, incident reports, e-mails, and letters form critical components of inquiry since the documents may be studied or analyzed to reveal changes whether positive or negative (Bridget & Cathy, 2005). Creswell (2007) said that documents are considered a priceless source of information that has the potential to save

a research valuable time and resources. The intrinsic case study approach was used for this research to gain a better understanding of the particular issue and to provide the local school with empirically grounded evidence that informs schools practices and policies on student discipline issues. This was accomplished through exploring the strategies used by the urban school site to decrease discipline, the use of a small group of participants, including teachers, administrators, and counselors, and limited time constraints.

Grounded theory, narrative study, phenomenology, and ethnography are other traditions that may have been selected to conduct the study; however, the traditions were not selected for a few reasons. Grounded theory is a method used to develop a theory for a particular phenomenon and generally uses a large number of people who have experienced the given phenomenon to develop a theory that is not already in existence (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Glaser, 2002). Grounded theory was not selected because a theory will not be abstracted for the study. Commonly, a narrative study is better suited for recording a series of events or recounting a specific event or life based upon an anecdote (Bold, 2012; Herman, 2009). Therefore, the narrative approach was not selected for the study. Phenomenology, according to Marshall and Rossman (2010) and Speziale and Carpenter (2010), attempts to investigate, analyze, and describe the meaning of a phenomenon from a lived experience, which was not the intent of the study, and consequently the phenomenology method was not selected. The experience of the researcher was not be compared or analyzed because the experience had no significance to the study. Finally, ethnography, according to Creswell (2007), is a type of research method that explores a designated group, for instance an ethnic group, or the baby

population at an identified location, or even teachers at a school over a long period of time. Because the research did not target a particular culture studied over an extended period, ethnography was not chosen (Creswell, 2003, 2007).

Mixed methods research is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study to understand the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2006). A mixed methods approach is helpful in developing analysis that generates richer data and to initiate new ways of thinking by attending to paradoxes that emerge for the two data sources (Creswell & Clark, 2006). The goal of the study was neither to generate more data nor to determine whether or not strategies were successful. The intent of the study was also not to gather before or after data about strategies or to generate outcomes from the interventions discovered, but to only explore and to obtain a profound understanding of strategies used to decrease discipline issues in the school. Therefore, an intrinsic case study was selected to execute the research.

A case study tradition is used to gain a detailed understanding of the processes involved within a setting, but this can involve studying a single or multiple cases and numerous levels of analysis (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) further suggested case studies are appropriate when investigating real life context. A case study may investigate an individual, a program, an organization, an institution, or an activity (Creswell, 2007) because the case in and of itself is of interest. Consequently, case study was selected to better understand and explore the strategies an urban elementary school used to decrease discipline problems. The case study was an urban school in the northeast part of the

United States, restricted to a small number of participants, and the projected time frame was from September 2013 through June 2014.

Research Questions

1. What types of student discipline problems existed in the school?

2. What strategies were developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems?

    a. Why were those strategies chosen?

    b. Who were the targets of the strategies?

    c. Who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies and what were their roles and responsibilities?

3. What were the outcomes of the strategies?

    a. Behavioral outcomes?

    b. Attributional outcomes?

    c. Decisions?

    d. Other outcomes?

The research questions were found to be relevant and appropriate for this study and were addressed fully in the data that were collected.

Context of the Study

The local school setting was a Title 1 school located in an urban community in the southern part of the state of New Jersey. The school services approximately 600 students in pre-K to eighth grade including autistic and self-contained classes. Discipline problems at the school included but were not limited to insubordination, threats, fighting, bullying,

disrupting instruction through loud outbursts and horse play, verbal abuse, defiance, and

disrespect of teachers, and are evidenced through administrative data and school-wide

plan reports. Other contributing factors to behavior issues were diversified cultural

customs and condoned or acceptable behavior at home or in the community, that were not

appropriate in a school setting. Several strategies had been used by individual teachers

and administrators to decrease these problems. As a member of the professional staff, I

was afforded the opportunity to serve on the school wide planning committee. I had

occasion to participate in meetings regarding discipline problems and strategies to

combat the dilemma. A school wide planning committee meeting held in the spring of

2012 discussed the problem of discipline issues and the need to develop and establish

strategies and procedures that would decrease discipline problems with the intention of

meeting state and federal mandates of the NCLB (2002) legislation. The school used

several strategies to decrease discipline including zero tolerance, out of school

suspension, and character education; however lacks evidence as to the strategies that

were effective or ineffective therefore further investigation was needed in order for there

to be consistent decreases in discipline issues.

Lack of empirical evidence on the decrease of discipline was problematic from a

research perspective for several reasons. First, confirmation of changes which reportedly

had occurred would be inadequate to affect sustainable increases in the desired behaviors

of students as there is no indication as to the strategies used; second, available data

offered no clear guidance on how to continue decreasing discipline in the local school

despite some progress the number of occurrences; third, educators would be unable to

purposely replicate the actions and or strategies used that resulted in decrease discipline. Finally, discipline problems might recur because of uncertainty of how results were achieved. This qualitative case study explored how the local school addressed discipline issues. The overarching goal of the study was for the researcher to provide the local school with empirically grounded evidence that informs school practices and policies on student discipline issues and to contribute to the existing scholarship on school discipline and classroom management challenges. The data gathered from this study provided information relating to decreased discipline problems in an urban school setting in New Jersey.

<div align="center">**Measures for Ethical Protection of Participations**</div>

Ethical Protections

Ethical issues that might possibly evolve from the study were addressed by the researcher. Being proactive to avoid ethical issues was crucial to protect the rights of all participants (Creswell, 2007). In order to conduct the research, permission was acquired from the Institutional Review Board of Walden University along with the school district in which the research was conducted and the local administrator of the selected site (Walden University IRB approval 03-14-14-0094033). Procedures were also followed to protect human interests. For the sake of confidentiality participants were given identifying coded names to safeguard and protect identities and interests in accordance with research law and the Institutional Review Board of Walden University (Kaiser, 2009; Walden University IRB, 2012; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). Participants were informed that all information collected would be kept in a secure place and

accessible only to the researcher throughout the duration of the study (Creswell, 2007; Kaiser, 2009).

Ethics were of utmost importance during all kinds of research dealing with people. The responsibility rest with the researcher to not only protect the privacy and dignity of the participants but also to protect the participant from harm or repercussions and to ensure this protection is expressed to all individuals involved in the study (Bell, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Educational Researcher, 2011; McLeod, 2007). Upon agreement of participant to take part in the study, I forwarded consent forms for the participant to review, as well as procedural guidelines to keep for their personal records. The informed consent explained in detail all risks that may be involved. A clause was included in the consent form to allow participants to withdraw from the study at any time (Edwards, 2005; Schaefer & Wertheimer, 2010). The consent form also included permission to use an audio recorder during the interview.

An in-person appointment was then set up at the convenience of the participant to answer any questions or concerns the participant had about the study, for final review of the consent form, and to obtain signatures prior to the interview phase. A copy of the signed informed consent form was given to the participant and the original kept in a locked file cabinet with access only to the researcher. The changing of the name of the school in question was also done to protect the interest of the district, personnel, and students.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

A personal letter of invitation was placed in the in-school mailboxes (Appendix A) and an email invitation was sent to all potential participants for the purpose of gaining access to participants. The letter summarized the research objectives and procedures and requested participation for the study (Appendix B). Prior to distributing invitations, the school district and the site principal received a summary of the research and permission was obtained in writing from the district representative and the site principal in order to conduct the study. (Appendix C) I set up an informal meeting after school for those interested in the study that needed additional information about the study before making a decision. Next, an in-person appointment was set up at the convenience of the participant to answer any questions or concerns the participant had about the study, for final review of the consent form, and to obtain signatures prior to the interview phase. A copy of the signed informed consent form was given to the participant and the original kept in a locked file cabinet. (Appendix D) Upon completion of all necessary documents I was able move forward with the case study research.

<p style="text-align:center">Role of the Researcher</p>

Past/Current Professional Roles at the Setting

I am a 20 year elementary school teacher and reading specialist currently teaching fourth grade reading and social studies. Past professional roles have included second grade teacher and basic skills teacher for grades third and fourth. My role as the researcher was to design the study, manage, and conduct the proceedings, analyze the data, and accurately report the results or findings minimizing bias throughout the process.

I am not in an authoritative or supervisory position as not to influence, coerce, or sway the views of the participants.

Past/Current Relationships with the Participants

The relationship of the participants and I was collaboration as peers and colleagues. The fact that the participants and I were familiar with and have worked closely together proved to be helpful to gathering accurate data for the qualitative study. It was my sole responsibility to effectively communicate to all persons invited to take part in the study, that involvement in the research was completely voluntary and whatever choice was made would be honored fully. Participants were also informed that withdrawal from the study was also an available option. Every attempt was be made to make participants at ease whether participating or not participating in the study.

Methods of Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship

Researcher-participants relationship was critical to promote ease of conversation and a relaxed atmosphere to conduct the interview. In order to establish the goal, I informed participants of the roles each would play in the study, shared the purpose of the study briefly, reviewed the interview questions, and answered any questions that arose in the process (Damon & Holloway, 2011; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Since I have worked in varied capacities in the local setting for many years, an established relationship existed among potential participants. Every effort was be made to make all participants feel comfortable throughout the proceedings.

Researcher's Experiences or Biases

I have been an elementary school teacher for the past 20 years and have served at the case study site for 20 years. I have also participated in the many aspects of this case study site, including serving on the school-wide improvement committee to address school discipline, classroom management workshops, and the development of school procedures. Although I was very concerned with the issue of discipline in school, I understood my role was to remain neutral not allowing my beliefs to affect the research hence the following procedures were implemented to diminish biases. Rich data, member-checking, and peer debriefing was carefully addressed to diminish biases. Member-checking and peer debriefing techniques were addressed later in the section. Bracketing is a technique used to minimize bias of the researcher and to prevent the data and the evaluation of the data from projecting my personal views, ideas, opinions, and postulation. Bracketing was not selected for the study since the measure was not commonly used in case study and had been most frequently used in conducting the phenomenology tradition.

The study used purposeful sampling to select participants. Specifically, stakeholder sampling was the method used for selecting participants. Stakeholder sampling is a type of sampling where the researcher depends on his understanding of who the most important stakeholders are and makes his selection of participants based on this information (Bourne, 2007; Given, 2008). To be selected for this study, all participants met the following criteria; certified staff members and involved with students population on a daily basis, participated in the everyday operations of the local setting, and in the

implementation of school discipline. The school principal assisted in identifying those who met the criteria indicated. A total of 12 participants were selected; 10 teachers, a counselor, and the principal. Invitations were sent out to the participants who met the aforementioned criteria. All invitees agreed to participate in the study. There were no declines. Each provided written permission to be audio taped during the one time only interview process. After the eligible 12 participants were selected, data collection began.

<div align="center">**Data Methods and Sources for Developing the Case**</div>

Selection of and Rationale for Data Methods

The qualitative research design was used so that information could be gathered directly from a select group of stakeholders who met criteria for participation. In-depth interviews with administrators and teachers, and documentary data, both of which were consistent with case study research, were used to collect data on the nature of the discipline problems and potential solutions for addressing problems. Each method is explained below.

Semi-structured Interviews

One strategy used to collect data was semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview produces more detailed information about the participant's perspective on a program, idea, or situation than other data collection methods such as surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The interviewer may use a list of generated questions and ask additional questions as necessary felt to be relevant and suitable (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Interviews were conducted with a small group of participants on an individual basis. Each participant was interviewed, using the same interview procedure

(Appendix E). Interviews were conducted one time only, consisted of a 30-45 minute time block and were conducted before or after school hours. All interviews were recorded using a tape recorder with the written permission of the participants.

Instrumentation

The primary source, the interview was obtained using a written form as well as a tape recorder to record all responses given during the interview process. The verbal responses were audio taped and later transcribed for understanding and interpretation. Secondary data sources including the school office report were obtained through permission of the school administrator; however the state schools report was retrieved from the state website (New Jersey Department of Education) which is public knowledge.

Written Documents

I documented participants' responses to the research questions. In addition to the audio recordings, a recording form (Appendix F) was used to take notes throughout the interview to improve accuracy and quality of data. The transcription of the recorded material took place after each interview session.

Selection of and Rationale for Data Sources

Interpretation was an important part of all qualitative research. Data sources to collect the information needed to address the research questions included interviews, documents, and artifacts. The use of interviews allowed the exchange of information and ideas through a question and response strategy. Interview data was collected from participants.

Documentary data was collected, reviewed, and analyzed. The first type of documentary data collected, reviewed, and analyzed was the school's yearly discipline report. The report displayed types of discipline problems reported and the consequences enforced. No student names or personal information were included in the report. The school's discipline report was used to corroborate practices adopted to decrease discipline issues, to understand discipline context and strategies that came up in the interviews, and prompted additional feedback from the participants.

The second type of documentary data that was collected, reviewed, and analyzed was the state's safety report located on an official government website. The safety report provided information pertaining to the types of discipline problems that existed and the types of consequential actions administered across the state. The state's report was a matter of public record since the data collected by the government's educational agencies and academic institutions are generally made available to the public for information, policy, and research purposes. School names were not disclosed to protect the anonymity of the research site and comparison schools. The use of existing public records did not require prior consent to review them when human subjects were not involved (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). In addition to providing additional data, the information collected from the two data sources mentioned above were used as a probing mechanism when interviewing the participants.

Procedures for Collecting Data

Creswell (2007) believed that researchers should employ rigorous data collection procedures. The data was collected using interviews, and data from state, district, and

local school databases. Selected participants, who consented to participate by signed and returned consent forms (Appendix D), were contacted via email or phone contact to schedule an appropriate and convenient time to once again review procedures and establish interview dates. Interviews consisted of a 30-45 minute time block and were conducted before or after school hours. When the times were inconvenient for any participant, due to schedule changes, permission was obtained from school administrators to conduct the interview at a time that was more convenient.

The location where the interview took place was organized and set up prior to interviewing participants. I ensured that the space was adequate, the lighting was sufficient, and that the environment was quiet and conducive for interviewing. Additionally I ensured that materials and supplies were readily available and maintained. I provided an atmosphere that was comfortable and personable during the interview to encouraging the participant to be at ease. Consequently, it was imperative to build relationships prior to conducting the interviews. "The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world"(Merriam, 2002). The interview questions were designed to respond to the research questions (Appendix E).

The responses were documented in several ways. The researcher recorded the interview using a tape recorder. A journal was used also to record verbal and non verbal communication. The interview was also recorded using paper and pencil (Appendix F). The participants' responses to the research questions were transcribed after each interview session.

To protect and secure the data, the participants' confidentiality, and the school's identity, a locked filing cabinet in my home was be used to store records and information related to the study. I am the only one who will have access to the locked cabinet. A username and personal password was created to protect electronic data on the computer being used to store data. Audio recordings were secured in a locked file cabinet in a locked closet inside a locked room accessible only to me to ensure protection. Hard copies were stored in a locked file cabinet in a securely locked room accessible solely to me. The data is stored securely for at least 5 years after the completion of the study, at such time; data will be disposed of properly. Data collected was aligned with questions posed for the study. The research questions in relationship to the interview questions are located in Appendix G. The correlation of the data collection procedures and the research questions is displayed in Appendix H.

I also gathered documentary data from the local school, district, and state databases. The district data center was contacted to obtain electronic data, such as incident reports, and the state data base was accessed on line to retrieve submitted school reports. Permission was obtained from school administrators to access onsite documents. Data was also obtained from school personnel including the principal, vice principal, secretaries. The data was used to answer the research questions and examine previous and present strategies as well as align with information received during interviews. An analysis of all information received was conducted and the results were recorded.

Data Analysis Strategies

For the study, the model developed for data analysis by Creswell (2007) was applied. Creswell (2013) suggests the following steps for data analysis including organizing and preparing the data collected, validating the data, reading the data, coding the data into patterns and themes, manipulating the themes, and the development of a report of the findings.

I transcribed all interviews that were conducted verbatim. A copy of the transcribed interviews was hand delivered to participants to be reviewed for accuracy and any necessary corrections. The participants were given 10 days to return the transcript. Upon validation and verification of the transcripts by the participants, I began to examine and identify patterns and common themes in the collected data to help in organization and classification.

All collected data was then sorted using a coding system including interviews, and documents from school data bases. Developing a coding system helps the researcher to manage the data collected by identifying patterns and themes in data (Creswell, 2007; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Schram, 2006). Codes are recurring phrases, ideas, or expressions that are articulated amongst the participants in the research study during interviews (Kvale, 2007; Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2009). Open coding and axial coding was used to make sense of the data, further scrutinize and reexamine data, group the data, develop further categories, and to get a better understanding of what had been gained through the data. Next, a chart was created using the data for the purpose of summarizing the information obtained. (Table 1)

Table 1

Types of Discipline Problems Reported/Identified

Discipline problems	Total Number of Respondents Interviewed	Number of Respondents Identifying discipline issue	Number of times recorded during participant Interview	Identified in school report and/or NJ state website
Fighting	12	9	15	yes
Bullying	12	6	8	yes
Disrespect/ Disregard for authority	12	8	14	yes
Inappropriate language	12	7	10	-
Non-Compliance/ Willful Disobedience	12	7	20	-
Inappropriate behavior	12	6	10	-
Out of uniform	12	1	2	-
Other	12	1	1	yes

Finally, a report was developed to provide further insight and a more in-depth understanding of the data as well as the results of the findings.

Procedures for Discrepant Cases

The researcher could be hindered by discrepant cases, therefore preparation was paramount. A discrepant case is one in which the responses or answers do not fit the universal pattern, are inconsistent or conflicting, or runs counter to the themes (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2010). The responsibility was mine as the researcher to minimize discrepancies by ensuring adequate and sufficient time to conduct all of the interviews as well as allotting interludes between each interview in order to complete the transcription of the responses. A discrepancy was addressed by revisiting the original data to gain a

better insight of the inconsistency of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The

member checking strategy was also a technique used for addressing discrepant cases.

Methods for Validity or Trustworthiness

Member Checking

Member checking is a strategy implemented in qualitative research that uses the

participants to check the interpretation of the interviews conducted (Calebrese, 2009;

Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The member checking process is conducted to

assure that the transcription is what the interviewee actually expressed during the

interview (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). The transcript was

delivered in person for the participant to review. Each participant was encouraged to

review and if necessary make corrections to the transcript prior to the main coding and

analysis process as part of the member checking procedure. Once all parties came to a

consensus on the transcript accuracy, I was able to proceed with the initial examination,

analysis, and coding of the data.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a method of establishing credibility and validity by allowing

peers to examine and review transcripts, emerging categories from transcripts, and give

feedback (Givens, 2008; Rizer, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). Here the researcher can discuss

the study with a peer who is knowledgeable and able to give educated feedback which in

turn may result in the researcher discovering hidden points about the research study

(Damon & Holloway, 2010; Given, 2008). Many writers have proposed that peer

debriefing further advances the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative research

project as well as an opportunity to discuss interpretation and analysis of data, and dig deeper into data (Creswell, 2009; Given, 2008; Janesick, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spall, 1998; Spillett, 2003). Peer debriefing was used to disclose biases and researcher assumptions that may have been present, as well as evaluate the quality of the emerging patterns from data received. Peer debriefing proved to be valuable to researchers because the procedure provided the researcher fresh eyes and possibly fresh approaches to analyze the data. Only two peer debriefers were enlisted from colleagues due to availability and time constraints. Both peer debriefers were doctoral graduates with insight as to the topic of study. One insider was chosen because of familiarization with the study topic. The other provided methodological insight.

Triangulation

Triangulation is another important strategy used in qualitative research to confirm validity and credibility by helping to provide a broader and deeper understanding of events and actions and by analyzing research questions from multiple perspectives (Merriam, 2009; Olsen, 2004; Stake, 2010). Data triangulation was conducted upon collection of data. Data triangulation involves using gathered data to make comparisons and identify areas of agreement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Associates, 2002). There are many types of triangulation including but not limited to environmental, theory, investigator, data, and methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation was used to validate the data because it entails using various data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Associates, 2002). The interviews, documents, and artifacts were

analyzed and compared. Areas where the information was consistent were identified and noted.

Collegial Review

A chairperson and several committee members comprise the collegial review and are responsible for channeling the researcher through the course of the study and serving as the dissertation committee. The process of consistent and deliberate communication with the chair and committee members was established. The relations assisted me in viewing the research from different perspectives and resulted in scholarly work throughout the study. The chairperson and committee members were current members of the Walden University community.

Section 4: Results

Generating, Gathering, and Recording the Data

Generation of Data

Interviews and documents were the data generated to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used at the prek-8 elementary school in New Jersey to decrease student discipline problems. Semi-structured interview questions were used in interviewing the participants to better understand the phenomenon. The documentary data were retrieved from the district and school-generated data reports used to evaluate and analyze results pertaining to school discipline. These included referral reports and the school report card.

Gathering of Data

For the study, data were gathered from 12 people who participated in the interview process. Days and times were scheduled with the participants to conduct interviews in locations mutually agreed upon by both parties. Interview times varied between 15 and 40 minutes. The duration of the interview was dependent on the quantity of data the participant conveyed relevant to the study. Two and a half weeks were set aside for the purpose of interviews. Documentary data were collected from the office of the principal, the school secretary, the district office, the district office website, and the state report card website.

Recording the Data

The data were recorded using pen and paper at the time of the interview meeting. A digital recording device was also used to assist in capturing the data in a clear and accurate way.

The digital recordings were labeled and organized for transcription at a later date. Additional questions contributing to the further understanding of the phenomenon that emerged during the interview and the response of the participant were recorded in side notes. Interviews were transcribed in a timely manner and were cross-checked with the digital recording device for accuracy. All data collected were stored in password-protected files on a computer at my residence. Audio recordings were secured in a locked file cabinet in a locked closet at my home. The space is accessible only to me to ensure protection of data. Hard copies (transcripts) were also stored in a locked file cabinet in a securely locked room at my home. I was the only one who had access to the locked cabinet and files. Data collected were aligned with research questions posed for the study.

Data Tracking System

A tracking system was developed and implemented in order to organize all aspects of the study, including solicitation of participants, distribution and collection of consent forms, scheduling of interviews for participants, and retrieving documentary data. A day planner was used to schedule appointment days and times for participants, to secure locations for interviews, and to schedule appointments to collect documentary data. A locked briefcase was used to keep track of documents. An interview form was used to capture notes taken during the interview. Digital tape recordings were coded with

information to make locating the data for transcription trouble-free and simple. All files were locked in a secure location in a locked file cabinet upon completion of the interview and transcription. Additional time was set aside for the transcribing, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing of all collected data.

The Findings

The educational problem addressed in this study was a lack of empirically grounded evidence of the strategies used by a single urban school in the northeast region of the United States to decrease school discipline problems. The purpose of this study was to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school in the northeastern part of the United States to decrease student discipline problems. The research questions, the findings related to the research questions, a discussion of how the findings were consistent with existing literature and the relationship of the findings to social learning theory and communities of practice theory follow.

Research Question 1: What types of student discipline problems existed in the school?

Participants in the study identified eight types of student discipline problems in the local setting. The eight types of discipline problems are categorized into four themes: disrespect for authority, bullying, fighting, and noncompliance or willful disobedience.

Finding 1: Disrespect of authority was a discipline problem exhibited by students that existed in the pre-K-8 elementary school. Findings related to the first question indicated that disrespect for authority contributed to the discipline problems experienced in the school. Teachers shared the belief that students being disrespectful to

those in authority were a serious problem in the school. Interviews indicated that students talked inappropriately to those in authority. Students often ignored instructions given and challenged the authority of teachers through deliberate defiance. Teacher 3 felt that students were disrespectful to teachers, security guards, and other staff members by ignoring correction and using inappropriate language. Similarly, Teacher 5 commented that the "Students have no regard for authority often arguing and cursing at staff members." When the parents were called to come into school, those same character traits of disrespect and inappropriate language were observed in the parents.

Nine out the 12 participants in the research study attested to being disrespected by a parent in front of the student who was already exhibiting disrespectful behavior. "No one wants to be disrespected; however, students often disrespect those in authority without any regard to the consequences," said one teacher. Similarly, another teacher said, "I've watched parents come in and support the child's behavior adding insult to injury by displaying the same disrespect."

Every participant in the study recalled personally writing disciplinary reports (office referrals) regarding disrespectful students. Documentary discipline data reviewed at the school confirmed written office referrals were submitted by staff signifying students had been disrespectful to their teachers, support staff, security officers, and other adult staff. The data documented behaviors including use of profanity, yelling at teachers, threats projected towards authority figures, and disregarding correction given by adults. Documentary data revealed there to be 1,106 behavior referrals on file. There were 432

reported referrals total indicating disrespect as one of the causations for the referral,

which accounted for 39% of the total written referrals processed (Figure 1).

>   ***Relationship to literature.*** The findings were consistent with the extensive

literature on disrespect as a major discipline problem in schools. Disrespect for authority

is defined as saying or doing something that shows a lack of respect (knowing the

important persons who are in authority and treating those persons in the appropriate

manner) for persons having a position of power (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Kelly,

2010; Lickona, 2009). Forms of disrespect may include but are not limited to talking back

or yelling at teachers, ignoring given directions, inappropriate language, and threats

(Dinkes, 2009; Michie, 2012). According to research, disrespect is a growing problem in

schools (Michie, 2012; White & Warfa, 2011). Hastings and Bham (2003) suggested that

disrespectful student behavior was the strongest predictor of burnout in teachers. Nelsen,

Escobar, Ortolano, Duffy, and Owen-Sohocki (2001) argued that a disrespected child

shows disrespectful behavior towards teachers and even other classmates because there

has been no real model of respect for them to emulate. Children often see and hear

disrespectful things happen in their home, neighborhood, or through some form of media,

which include name-calling, belittling, and shouting. The behavior appears to be

acceptable in the community, reinforced through what children watch in the media, and

tolerated in some homes. In turn, children bring these same behaviors into the classrooms

only to find out the behaviors are unacceptable (White & Warfa, 2011). All of the

participants in the study mentioned they have experienced some type of disrespectful

behavior from students and that it was an ongoing discipline issue that needed to be addressed further.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The finding connected to the conceptual framework by Bandura (1997) classified under the social learning theory. Social learning theory contends that the behavioral habits of children, whether they are good or bad, are developed through observational learning and is categorized as imitation or modeling (Bandura, 1977; Ormrod, 2011; Thomas, 2005). In other words, children tend to be what it is they see others do (Ormrod, 2008; Thomas, 2005). Harris and Nolte (1998) simply stated it this way that "Children learn what they live."

The communities of practice theory contend that learning can be social and based on experiences on a daily basis (Wenger, 2007). Even though the behaviors are negative, the communities in which the students are connected define their behavior. Disrespect tends to breed more disrespect and in many cases causes the one who is being disrespected to become disrespectful at some point themselves. The finding was consistent with the communities of practice theory.

Numerous influential models surround students. The models include, but are not limited to, parents, siblings, and others within the household, characters on television, friends within their peer group, teachers at school, persons within their neighborhoods, and leaders within their communities. The models provide examples for students to observe, encode, and imitate what has been observed at a later time, whether the behavior is appropriate or not (Mcleod, 2011; Nelson et al., 2002). Teacher 6 pointed out an incident where a new student to the school who was seemingly respectful upon arrival

changed over a short period and began to exhibit the inappropriate behaviors observed from misbehaving peers in the classroom. Similarly, Teacher 4 experienced dealing with siblings and noticing the same disrespectful behavior in each of them.

Finding 2: Bullying is another student discipline problem that existed at the school. The second finding related to Research Question 1 is the discipline problem of bullying of other students in the school. The school recognizes the problems caused by bullying and has actively taken steps to address and decrease the bullying issue**.** Teachers described bullying with phrases such as making fun of others, mocking, intimidating peers, or threatening smaller or weaker persons. Teacher 11 said, "I've seen other students pick on children who were smaller than they were". "They always seem to taunt children who appear easily frightened", remarked Teacher 7. Documentary data (office referrals) indicates students who have been involved in bullying other students have been given Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (H.I.B.) referrals from the school and some were additionally referred to other agencies such as Rainbow, and Behavioral Health for this inappropriate behavior. Students bully other students who are considered weaker by calling them names, saying derogatory things about them, spreading information on the Internet, and playing distasteful pranks. Bullying has been experienced in all grade levels according to the information received from the participants in the study. Participants 3 and 6 talked of bullying going on during primary recess periods, in the classrooms, and in the lunchroom. Teachers 9, 10, 11, and 12 described student acts of bullying occurring in the hallways, at the lockers, in the common areas of the school, gym classes, and even in the classrooms. Teacher 4 stated, "Students are just not nice to each other. They make

fun, tease, and intimidate those who for the most part won't respond or have what you would call a "weak" comeback." Additionally, a teacher referenced particular agencies that have been called upon to assist the school with bullying issues to help the student make necessary changes to inappropriate behavior exhibited. The agencies included mental health center, family services agency, anger management programs, and outside psychologists. Documentary data revealed teachers have submitted discipline referrals describing bullying incidents to the office on a daily basis indicating the seriousness of the problem. A review of the archival data including school reports confirmed bullying as a discipline problem that existed at the school. According to the office records bullying accounted for 9% of all referrals written which is 105 of 1106 written referrals (Figure 1).
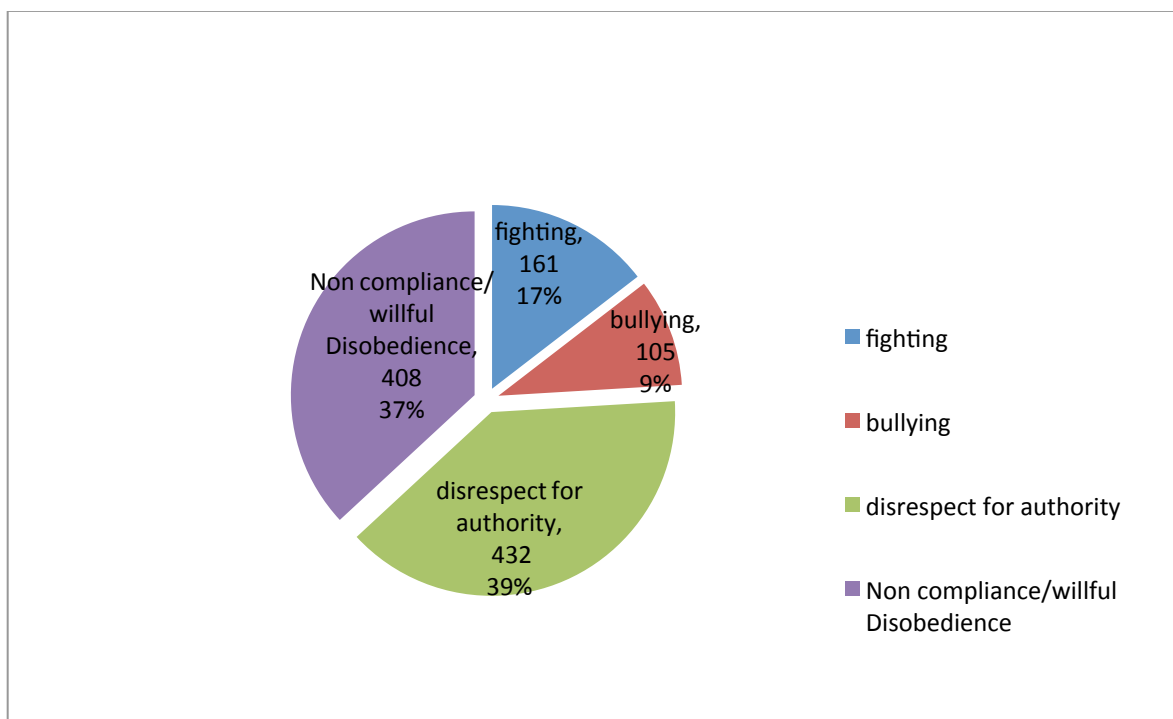
Figure 1. Types of discipline problems/number of incidents.

Relationship to literature. The findings were consistent with the literature.

Bullying has become a serious problem in our country (Benbenshity & Astor, 2005;

Sampson, 2009). Bullying is considered a widespread form of aggression used by people

that has spilled over into the school system as low as the primary grades and has become

a serious dilemma across the country (O'Brien, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009; White &

Warfa, 2011). Jimerson, Swearer, and Espelage, (2010) suggested that bullying entails

recurring acts of physical, emotional and/or social behavior that are deliberate,

calculating, and insensitive. Bullying can be either direct or non-direct. Additionally,

direct and indirect school bullying is deliberate (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007;

Olweus & Limber, 2010). Examples of physical bullying may include being beaten, hit,

kicked, punched, spit at, or any other form of physical attack (Sullivan, Cleary, &

Sullivan, 2004; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Emotional bullying

can involve things such as exclusion, spreading rumors (verbally, or by social media

internet, and texting), and taunting, to aggressive body language (Espelage, Green, &

Polanin, 2012; Liepe-Levinson & Levinson, 2005). Recent acts of bullying in schools

across the United States have resulted in victims of bullying retaliating causing deadly

consequences in some cases (Espelage, Green, & Polanin, 2012; Urbanski & Permuth,

2009). Even though federal, state, local, and schools have adopted anti-bullying policies

the problem continues to be a major concern for students, teachers, and the community,

therefore strategies must be developed and implemented to decrease the problem making

the school atmosphere a safe environment in which to learn (Liepe-Levinson & Levinson,

2005; Urbanski & Permuth, 2009). Teachers experienced having to deal with bullying

consistent with the literature at the K-8 Elementary School in places including the hallways, cafeteria, classrooms, and playground resulting in adopting anti-bullying policies to decrease the number of occurrences.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The finding and literature are linked to the conceptual framework of the social learning theory by Bandura (1977). One of the core concepts of the social learning theory is learning through observation. Learning can take place just by watching (Cherry, 2006; Sincero, 2011). Students not only watch what goes on at home but also observe things happening in the neighborhood, the community, the school, and the media including television, video games, and the internet (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006; Sincero, 2011). One teacher posits children sometimes carry over bullying situations and episodes that originated at home or in the neighborhood, into the school environment causing the school personnel to quell the problem.

Finding 3: Fighting was revealed to be an additional student discipline problem at the elementary school. Finding three related to Research Question 1 is student fighting. Fighting is the process of using physical energy to try to hurt or injure another person. Teachers have had to intervene in physical altercations of students against students and students against teachers in the past (Teacher 6). Additionally, Teacher 6 experienced students fighting in the classroom requiring the assistance of security to diffuse the situation and escort students to the office. Teacher 6 said, "I had to call for security to come break up a fight and the security guard was almost injured in the process". Teacher 5 remembered "intervening to break up and fight and the student then attacking me". Documentary data from sources such as referral forms and school reports

indicates students have been disciplined at the school for fighting on many occasions. The total number of written referrals for fighting was 161 out of 1106 overall referrals. Teacher 1 remarked that "security and teachers put themselves at risks of injury when confronted with the situation of breaking up fights within the school, which is troubling". One teacher remarked, "Students often say my mom or my dad said if someone hits you, hit them back". Still another teacher said, "Many times other students provoke students to fight, sometimes over silly things like he said something about your mother". Documentary data indicate that fighting at school occurs on a regular (weekly) basis and is reported through school referral report forms. A review of incident reports indicated fights had occurred involving students fighting each other (150/161 referral) and a few describing attacks on teachers (10/ 161 referrals). Fighting represents 15% of all discipline referrals according to the school discipline report (Figure 1).

Relationship to literature. The literature shows that fighting is a major concern in public schools (Noguera, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). The existing literature is consistent with the finding of the research study on school discipline and fighting. Fighting may occur for reasons such as jealousy, aggressive behavior, provocation, seeking attention, or during a misunderstanding on the playground cafeteria or common areas (McConville & Cornell, 2003; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Physical fights during school hours are a potentially dangerous/hazardous behavior that disrupts the school setting and hinders the instructional process, causing chaos and disorder. According to Payne, Gottfredson, and Gottfredson (2003, 2004), students involved in physical fights may encounter even more challenges in being successful in their educational pursuits due

to negative consequences from their behavior including but not limited to out of school suspension or expulsion. Quinn, Bell-Ellison, Loomis, and Tucci (2007) concluded that many students fight because of parents encouraging them to fight, being pressured by their peers, or because of their own anger.

   Relationship to conceptual framework. The findings are consistent with the conceptual framework of the social learning theory of observation and participation. Children learn by observation and participation including playtime according to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Since children participate in playing video games Gentile and Gentile (2009) argued that violent video games use methods that are successful pedagogy the best practice principles of learning and instruction. The more they play or practice the more they learn. What is acceptable behavior in one environment may not be acceptable in another. Fighting and violence may be an everyday occurrence in the child's environment, which may include home and the neighborhood; however that behavior is not acceptable in the school system. The child only models what they see others do, whom he or she may look up to or admire. Being a pre-K-8 school children unfortunately observe what older siblings are doing and often times model what they see including fighting. Older students have been seen coaching the younger sibling on how to fight as well as instigating fights and occasionally joining in the fight (Teacher 8, 9, &12).

   Finding 4: Noncompliance/willful disobedience were identified as another discipline issue. Participants revealed noncompliance/willful disobedience as yet another discipline problem in the school system. The transcripts were clear, indicating

noncompliance/willful disobedience as a major concern for teachers. Individuals are described as noncompliant if they fail to or refuse to follow the instructions of an authority figure or conform to the school rules. Examples of non-compliant behavior shared by 12 of the 12 participants included being out of uniform, loud outburst in class, failure to follow the class or school rules, being out of their seat, running in the hallways, refusing to commence an assigned activity in the given time, deciding to do something other than what has been directed, ignoring others altogether, and intentional disobedience. Teacher 5 stated, "Students often tell you what they are not going to do and what they will do. Many want to have their own way instead of following the instructions given." Still another teacher expressed a concern that students often refuse to listen to the voice of authority often doing such things such as over talking the person in charge, making humming noises as to drown out the voice of the authority figure, walking away or just plain ignoring persons in charge. Teachers spoke of the home and community environment as being influential in the behaviors of students and the changes that needed to be made in the school to turn the behaviors around (Table 2).

Table 2

Discipline Issues Recorded

Discipline problems	Total Number	Percentages
Fighting	161	15%
Bullying	105	9%
Disrespect/ Disregard for authority	432	39%
Non-Compliance/ Willful Disobedience (includes inappropriate language, inappropriate behavior, out of uniform)	408	37%

Relationship to literature. The findings are consistent with the broader literature

on discipline issues in the schools. Walker, Ramsey and Gresham (2005) have

recapitulated non-compliance to be things such as direct defiance, passively ignoring the

request or direction of the teacher or adult in charge, trying to invoke choice as an option

to the direction given, plain repudiation, refusal to work within the boundaries of the

direction articulated by the teacher, and not performing to the best of their ability

assignment given. Regrettably, teachers are the ones who must implement the strategies

even though researchers, administrators, and school boards are generally the persons who

seem to set the stricture of non-compliant behavior (Reynolds & Stephenson, 2008;

Walker et al., 2005). Noncompliance/willful disobedience are consistent with the

literature on misbehavior in schools. Many participants in the study have experienced

students who just simply refused to conform to the rules of the school and/or classroom,

as well as those who chose to ignore the given instruction and reinterpreted the given

directions to their personal advantage. Students cannot perform to the best of their ability or reach their maximum potential when exhibiting noncompliant behavior.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The finding is consistent with the framework of Bandura's social learning theory**.** Bandura (1977) believed in "reciprocal determinism", specifically, the world and a person's behavior cause each other. Reciprocal determinism (belief that everything is caused by something) might become evident or apparent when a child is acting inappropriately in school. The result of a child wanting to stay home from school may manifest in inappropriate behavior (Rice, 2006). Teachers interviewed felt that students come to school with a multitude of baggage from home and the neighbourhood (i.e., a disturbance in the neighbourhood that required police presence) resulting in non-compliant behavior. In turn, the student's behavior causes the person in authority to respond with some type of discipline. Each behavioral and environmental factor coincides with the child resulting in an incessant battle on all three levels: the environment, behavior, and one's psychological processes (Rice, 2006).

Research Question 2: What strategies were developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems?

Sub questions included:

    a. Why were those strategies chosen?

    b. Who were the targets of the strategies?

    c. Who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies and what were their roles and responsibilities.

Participants identified the types of strategies that were developed and deployed, why

particular strategies were chosen, the targets of the strategies, persons involved in the

development and the implementation of the strategies, and finally the roles and

responsibilities of those involved for the purpose of decreasing student discipline

problems. The findings described are about the strategies developed and deployed to

decrease the discipline problems, why the strategies were chosen, and who the targets of

the strategies were. Additionally, who was involved in the strategy development and

implementation along with the roles and responsibilities of said persons were explored.

Finding 1: Strategies developed and deployed to decrease discipline problems

were in-school suspension, out of school suspension, detentions, Parent/Teacher

Conferences (PTC'S), and character education. A multiplicity of strategies were

developed and deployed to decrease discipline problems at K-8 Elementary School**.**

Strategies used by the school included in-school suspension, out of school suspension,

detentions, PTC's, and character education. Teachers also communicated that

collaborating teams and counseling strategies were developed and implemented.

In-school suspension (ISS) was implemented to decrease the number of out-of

school suspension and to decrease the number of absenteeism, allowing students to

continue to receive educational instruction in a controlled environment. In-school

suspension is a punitive action that allows students to remain in a school classroom type

environment. One participant remarked that giving students ISS was better because at

least the students were not out in the streets left to their own devices while another

participant allows students to experience consequences for their actions without missing school.

Out of school suspension was enforced for the more severe offences of discipline in the school. Students can receive between one and ten days depending on the severity of the offense. The practice began in the 1960's and continues in many schools as a consequence for inappropriate behavior. One participant revealed that many students received out of school suspension and continued to be repeat offenders.

Detentions were used by the school for students who misbehaved during the school day. Students were kept for additional time as a consequence for improper behavior usually before or after school. Some detentions had been served during other times of the day such as lunch and recess. The purpose was to discourage students from misbehaving in the first place. The strategy was primarily used for what is considered minor infractions including but not limited to being late to class, disruptive outburst, leaving an area without permission, or missing or incomplete assignments.

Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTC's) are used to encourage conference meetings between staff and parents in order to discuss discipline problems occurring within the school setting. Parental involvement in such conferences was vital to the success of students as it models cooperation and teamwork between the school and the home. One teacher talked of always making the attempt to have meetings with parents to keep them informed as to what is going on at school before things can escalate into an even more serious problem.

Character education Teacher 9 explained that the program was geared towards developing moral character in students such as honesty, cooperation, courtesy, patience, and helpfulness. The program recognized students who exhibited that particular character trait highlighted for the month and promoted with special incentive rewards (Teacher 3). When asked about the purpose of the program all participants indicated the outcome was to encourage all students to take on the character trait taught that particular month.

Collaborating teams were grade levels of teams that meet together on a regular basis to discuss a student's overall performance. Behavioral issues were also discussed in the meetings to assure all teachers were on the same page with students and were abreast of any issues that may have been be occurring. Additional meetings were scheduled as needed and included additional persons, as needed to ensure an issue was resolved in the best possible manner. Teacher 3 stated that "this approach works for our middle school team because if a student is having problem in one class it may be occurring in another and we as a team will be able to identify the pattern and come up with some kind of solution to solve the issue". "Our team consists of all the teachers in the grade level coming together to brainstorm resolutions to problems we may have with a particular student in order to help that student reach their potential in all areas," said Teacher 6. Similarly, Teacher 6 said, "It helps to know that a student is having discipline issues in my colleague's class similar to mine and it also helps us to keep the student in check because we all know what is going on, whether academically struggling or just being a behavior problem".

Counseling were one on one or group sessions set aside to talk with students who were experiencing difficulty controlling their inappropriate behavior. Counseling had been used to decrease discipline problems in the school. The counseling was done by the teacher for simple misbehaviors, and then by an administrator, a school counselor, or an outside agency for more serious discipline problems. Teacher 5 expressed "the counseling has helped a lot of students learn to deal with and modify their behavior because it helps to get to the root of the problem." Similarly, teacher 10 stated that "the use of outside agencies to assist in counseling has helped students with discipline issues and their families as well." (Table 3)

Table 3

Types of Strategies Developed and Deployed

Strategies	Total Number of Respondents Interviewed	Number of Respondents Identifying discipline issue	Number of times recorded during participant Interview	Identified in school report and or NJ state website
In-school suspension	12	12	20	yes
Out of school	12	8	25	yes
Detentions	12	4	4	-
Parent/Teacher Conferences (PTC'S)	12	7	10	-
Character education	12	6	16	-

Relationship to literature. The results of the research study were in line with those found in the broader literature pertaining to strategies used to decrease discipline problems in schools. Literature indicated that no significant data supports out of school as

a strategy to decrease discipline problems or improve school climate; however, the available data did suggest that, out of school suspension and expulsions appeared to have *negative* effects on student outcomes and the learning climate (American Psychological Association, 2008; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Yankouski, Masserelli, & Lee, 2012). Out of school suspension evolved in the 1960's as a strategy to reduce student inappropriate behavior and continues to be used today throughout the United States (Adams, 2000; Garner, & Garner, 2008). While there is evidence in literature advising against the use of out of school suspension because of the negative effect it has on students, many schools continue to implement the strategy (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba, Cohn, & Canter, 2004; Yankouski, Masserelli, & Lee, 2012). There is, however, strong evidence in literature on the effectiveness of in school suspension as being a "healthier" and safer alternative to out of school suspension (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010). In school suspension permits schools to punish inappropriate behaviors and to intervene in a positive manner keeping students in the educational environment (Bloomberg, 2004; Verdugo, 2002). Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTC's) were used to deter discipline problems and provides a venue in which teachers and parents can discuss issues affecting students academically, socially, and behaviorally, and possible solutions to the present issue (Booth & Dunn, 2013).

The literature showed character education as a positive strategy to decrease discipline problems and to encourage good behavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Narváez & Nucci, 2008). The outcome of the program was to illustrate to students how to make ethical decision (right choices) to help schools create safe learning environments, prevent

victimization and peer bullying, decrease discipline problems, curtail or eradicate cheating, promote ethical development, and produce public-spirited citizens (O'Connell, 2007; Thorson, 2005; U.S. DoE, 2006). Literature consistently corroborated the fact that collaborating teams were effective because the composition of the team incorporated the expertise of many professional working toward the goal of developing the whole student (Pane, 2009; Smith, 2003, 2009). The team can include the entire grade level of teachers, the counselors, the school nurse and other necessary persons to find solutions for academic and/or behavioral challenges a student may be experiencing (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008).

Detentions were a type of disciplinary strategy used in schools mandating students that have misbehaved to stay for an additional amount of time either before or after regular school hours (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). There is a plethora of literature on counseling as a strategy to decrease student discipline problems. Counseling by teachers can help students to see problems before they escalate and counseling by school counselors may help students to express any underlying issues manifested through misbehavior (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). This finding was consistent with the literature.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The communities of practice theory identified three components, domain, communities, and practice (Smith, 2003, 2009; Wenger circa 2007). Domain is persons that have a shared interest, communities mean that persons are actively involved in discussion and interaction, assist each other and learn from each other (Jonassen & Land, 2012). Finally, practice implied working

together to develop a gamut of ideas to address problems (Ricci, and Rogers, 2004). The findings of the research study were consistent with the framework. Teachers collaborated to find solutions for behavioral issues in the school. When discipline problems occurred teachers used their repertoire of resources including calling parents, holding detentions when necessary, and restricting extra-curricular activities as a team effort to decrease behaviors.

Finding 2: Strategies were purposefully selected to decrease discipline problems and encourage good behavior. The findings revealed that the strategies were selected in order to decrease discipline problems, and to promote good behavior in the school. Teaching cannot occur in a chaotic environment therefore in order to decrease discipline problems strategies including detentions, team collaboration, parent-teacher conferences, and counseling were selected. To promote good or positive behavior in the school a character education program was selected. There were also particular strategies that were selected by administration and part of the district's strategies to promote a safe learning environment and to meet the mandates of NCLB. "Some strategies we used were handed down from administration to be used by all schools", said Teacher 8. Still others were chosen by the school team collaboratively because of the flexibility in austerity and to influence students to assume responsibility for their actions. Teachers commented that the collaborating team strategy was selected to get all teachers involved and on the same page in order to help students thrive in every area.

Relationship to literature. The existing literature was consistent with the finding of the research study referencing strategies used to decrease discipline problems.

Literature revealed that selecting the right strategies to use was vital to the success of being able to decrease discipline issues in the school. Investigating and choosing programs that meet the specific needs of the students and school may take time and effort however stakeholders must invest the time and energy to analyze and evaluate which strategies will work best (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008; Vernberg & Gamm, 2003). Teachers and administrators who are actively involved in the creating, developing and execution of strategies are more likely to be committed to the process and its ultimate attainment or success ((Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Lickona, 2009). Character education programs promote good character progress resulting in moral, self-controlled, responsible citizens of the community (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Lickona, 2009; Narváez & Nucci, 2008).

Relationship to conceptual framework. The communities of practice component allowed teachers and administrators to work together to select and develop a variety of strategies to address the issue of decreasing discipline problems in the school arena (Ricci & Rogers, 2004). The members of the group (teacher, administrators, school leadership team, etc.) used the resources selected to decrease discipline problems, evaluate their effectiveness, and further develop or restructure selected ideas. The finding is consistent with Lave's communities of practice theory.

Finding 3: The entire student body at K-8 Elementary School was the target of the strategies. The participants revealed that the target of the strategies were all students due to the significant number of written referrals processed throughout the previous year. There were over 1200 referrals in the previous school year as indicated by

the 2012 school report and a decrease of about 100 in the 2013 school report. Five out of

12 participants believed that even though the target of the strategies was every student,

the real focus was mainly repeat offenders. When asked about repeat offenders the

perception of eight out of 12 participants was one who has been disciplined for an

infraction however continue to get into trouble at school. Teacher 2 talked about the fact

that trying to get non-compliant, disobedient students to consider their ways was a big

concern that required the attention of all stakeholders. However, the main idea gathered

during the interviews was that the school and the teachers make sure that the strategies

are equitable across the board and that all students are treated fairly throughout the

process. All participants said during the interview that all students were made aware of

the policies and strategies. Participants further attested that the aforementioned was

reviewed with all students and discussed at special assemblies. Each assembly was

conducted by an administrator. Classroom discussions about the policies and strategies

were conducted during the first days of school. Teacher lesson plans indicated

discussions were carried out. Classroom discussions were conducted by teachers and

counselors. Students were also given a student handbook in order for students to have an

understanding of what is expected and the consequences that would be enforced should

there be any infractions. Teacher 3 said "I made sure my students were aware of the

policies, procedures, and strategies by reviewing the handbook with them and then

sending the handbook home with a slip to be signed and returned by parents. The slip

indicated the parent read the handbook with the student and both of them understand the

content." During Open House sessions parents were also given student handbook to

review with their children concerning all policies concerning discipline. The effort was documented through assemblies and principal meetings (including sign sheets) with the student body as well as parents. The sign-in sheets were filed in the central office.

Relationship to literature. Literature confirmed that in order for strategies to be successful they must be reviewed, researched, implemented with integrity and be equitable for all students (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Smith, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2012). According to the literature there must be an equitable application, meaning all students must be treated with similar equality for the infractions displayed. The process of having flexibility in severity allows the administration of strategies to be conducted fairly even amongst repeat offenders (Sun & Shek, 2012). The finding was consistent with the literature. Data collected suggested that teachers and administrators were flexible in the administration of strategies allowing students to receive opportunities to change their behaviors.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The finding was consistent with both the social learning theory and the communities of practice theory. The conceptual framework of the social learning theory particularly modeling was paramount in identifying targeted groups**.** The social learning theory emphasized modeling, reinforcement and practicing. Communities of practice allowed members of groups to vary depending on the desired outcome. Even though strategies to decrease discipline issues were developed to encompass the entire student body, an emphasis was also focused on a specific group of repeat offenders, with a concerted effort to assist that group in minimizing misbehaviors. This was evident in the interview responses as eight out of 12 teachers specifically

thought that even though the strategies were for all students, repeated offenders would be the particular focus.

Finding 4: The principal, vice principals, teachers, counselors, specialists, coaches, and district board were involved in the development of the strategies. Finding 4 signified that the participants believed the individuals involved in the process included the principal, vice principals, teachers, counselors, specialists, coaches and the district board. Ten out of 12 participants thought administration, mainly the district board, principal, and vice principal, were involved the development of strategies to decrease discipline problems in the elementary school. Teachers were the next highest group involved in developing and selecting strategies to decrease discipline problem in the classrooms.

Secondly, the roles of those involved were to brainstorm ideas and/or develop strategies to help decrease discipline. They were to relay strategies to all stakeholders. All participants felt that the responsibility of all individuals was to enforce the strategies and to follow through with the consequences as well as inform all students of the strategies to be used.

Next, the administrators, teaching staff, paraprofessionals, and security personnel performed the implementation of the strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school. Teacher 7 said that "the implementation should be done by all staff including teachers, counselors, security officers, office personnel, administrators, and other support staff who interact with the student population throughout the day, in order to present a united front for the students".

Counseling was conducted by the school counselors and by outside agencies depending upon the extent of counseling needed. Teacher 7 commented that "counseling by outside agencies is not only beneficial to the student but also to the parents in redirecting inappropriate behaviors". The teachers implemented strategies such as detentions, parent-teacher conferences, character education, and collaborations. It was also mentioned by Teacher 9 that certain strategies such as in school suspensions and out of school suspensions could only be implemented by administration and that the district board alone authorizes student expulsion. Documented school leadership committee meetings indicate all listed individuals participated in the development of the strategies. Attendance sign-in sheets for each meeting were available for review in the central office. Examination of the school handbook revealed that the school handbook detailed discipline concerns and consequences for specific behavioral problems.

Relationship to literature. The finding was consistent with the literature. Literature suggests the importance of having all stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of strategies to be used so that everyone buys into the process in order for it to be successful (Safran & Oswald, 2003). When all persons take ownership by participating in the process, the willingness to implement the strategies, reinforces the strategies, and continuously practiced the strategies increases (Milsom & Gallo, 2006; Reyes, 2006). K-8 elementary school enlists the involvement of a variety of staff members to assist in the development and implementation of strategies so that they will take ownership of the process in order to achieve success. Teacher 6 recalled being

invited to participate in several school-wide improvement planning meetings in which strategies were developed.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The communities of practice components of domain, communities, and practice classified the roles, collaboration, and involvement of those participants listed above. Wenger (2007) describes communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern to do something better by learning from each other and working collaboratively" (Smith, 2003, 2009). The finding was consistent with the communities of practice theory. The principal, vice principals, teachers, counselors, specialists, coaches and the district board formed domains (particular groups to deal with specific problems), worked in communities (interacting in meaning discussions), and practiced (became practitioners) in order to create, develop, and implement strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school.

Research Question 3: What were the outcomes of the strategies?

Sub questions included:

a. Behavioral outcomes?

b. Attributional outcomes?

c. Decisions?

The findings described are the behavioral, reputational, and decisional outcomes of the strategies developed and deployed to decrease the discipline problems.

Finding 1: Better behavioral management was a behavioral outcome of the strategies. Findings related to question 3 revealed better (improved) management in the common areas and hallways as a behavioral outcome. Student discipline problems have

decreased in the common areas such as the hallways of the school. A review of written

referrals concerning the common areas showed a decrease in behavioral issues

throughout the hallways and common areas. When students adhere to the rules and

policies, less discipline referrals are written, commented Teacher 1. Seven out of 12

participants commented on the hallways being quieter and orderly as students traveled

from one place to another. One participant shared that a visiting administrator

complimented the school on the noise level reduction and the orderly fashion in which

the students now passed through the halls. It was noted that five of the 12 participants felt

that school staff members were doing a good job at reinforcing the required behavior in

the hallways and common areas. Office data did not include data concerning hallway and

common areas.

     Relationship to literature. When guidelines and rules are set for the school, as

well as the classroom, with clear expectations the results are better behavior management

and better control (Feinstein, 2013; Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010). Consistency is the

key to positive behavioral results. Teachers felt that most teachers that they observed in

the hallways with classes attempted to take control by giving clear directions and

expectations concerning appropriate hallway behavior of their students. The finding was

consistent with the literature in that successfully ameliorating discipline problems

requires unswerving constant fortification of rules and expectancies.

     Relationship to conceptual framework. The social learning theory incorporates

modeling to change a behavior (Ormond, 2011; Thomas, 2005). The finding was

consistent with the social learning theory of modeling. All stakeholders used modeling to

demonstrate the proper behavior in the hallways in order to influence students to conform to the practice. Good character traits were put on display to demonstrate what good school citizens do so students would have a model to follow. The practice component of communities of practice helped teachers and administrators to evaluate and discover the results of in school suspension and out of school suspension the impact it has had on the decrease of discipline in the school.

Finding 2: In-school suspensions, character education, and collaborative teamwork attributed to the decrease in discipline problems at the elementary school. Finding 2 related to question 3 and showed that one of the contributing factors was the implementation of in school suspension. In school suspension afforded schools the opportunity to keep more students in the school environment. Teacher 12 said, "Since the implementation of our in school suspension strategy, less students are receiving out of school suspension from administrators". The incorporation of character education also was an attributional outcome for the school. The implementation of the "character of the month" program effected change in the student body where students wanted to be selected as possessing the trait highlighted to receive recognition and rewards (Teacher 1). According to documentation relayed to personnel, the program allowed staff to pick up to three students per month that demonstrated the specified characteristic. The student was then invited to participate in a school wide celebration and receives a certificate of recognition for being selected. A picture was taken of each student with an administrator and displayed on the walls in the hallways of the school in hopes to encourage other students to strive for the goal of being selected.

Collaborative teamwork was also a contributing factor or outcome. Teachers created and developed teams depending on the specific students in their group at the middle school level and worked together in order to help students reach their maximum potential. Whether it was a problem with math, or a discipline issue that carried over into every class, the team scheduled meeting with the student, the student and parent, the parent, the team and counselors and the team and administrators to seek information and design strategies to assist the student in making positive change. A review of data revealed the collaborative team generated written records of each meeting to refer to at subsequent meetings and to share with administration if indicated. Teacher 1 felt that the idea of having the entire team work together and be on the same page cut down on a lot of problems because all those involved knew what the challenges were with that particular students and were able to give critical input to promote problem solving a more expeditious manner.

Relationship to literature. Literature on in school suspension indicated positive and negative effects of the strategy, as it is effective in keeping students in the academic halls of learning rather than left to their own devises at home or on the streets. However, research revealed if the strategy is not implemented with rigor and in an orderly fashion the effects may be detrimental to the students and the school. Literature has shown that many schools have lowered the rate of out of school suspension only to increase the rate of in school suspension (Garner & Garner, 2008; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010). More in-school suspensions are given in an attempt to keep students at school and off the

streets. In school suspension allows students who have committed less severe infractions to remain at school in an educational/academic environment (Theriot et al., 2010).

Literature has also implied that out of school suspension is ineffective in that it does not decrease discipline problems or improve the learning environment (Hinojosa, 2008; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003)**.** Literature has shown in an attempt to decrease out of school suspension there may be an increase in other areas including in school suspension (Garner & Garner, 2008; Keleher, 2009). Documentary data (daily suspension update report) indicated the number of out-of-school suspensions at pre-K-8 Elementary School has decreased, however, the number of in-school suspensions have increased. The finding was consistent with the broader literature on school discipline. Literature revealed that using strategies that are positive such as character education not only help to decrease discipline problems but also have an effect on student achievement. Children require positive reinforcement and constant rewards to diminish discipline issues. Character education promotes positive reinforcement by building character and responsibility. Character education programs increases the sought-after behavior, diminishes the inappropriate behavior, and encourages students to make correct and appropriate choices (Berkowitz, 2011; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lapsley, Power, Narvaez, McKinnon, Blasi, Higgins-D'Alessandro, & Brandenberger, 2014).

The finding was consistent with existing literature on collaborative teamwork that brings together those with expertise and resources to benefit the students. It developed an atmosphere conducive for brainstorming and sharing of information as well as a platform

to evaluate results or outcomes. Teachers at pre-K-8 elementary school used the collaborative team approach regularly to decrease the discipline problems in the school.

Relationship to conceptual framework. Strategies used to decrease discipline problems were classified by Bandura's (1997) social learning theory. The social learning theory confirmed that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. As students observe good character learning is taking place; however, Bandura (1997) also reminds us that observation does not always result in the desired behavior. The teachers at pre-K-8 elementary school displayed the modeling of correct behavior in order to encourage students to comply with the rules and policies especially in the primary grades. The modeling was reinforced at the middle and intermediate levels to remind students of their obligation to set good examples for the younger students. The finding was consistent with the framework. As teacher 7 noted the desired behavior was not always exhibited but the modeling continued.

Finding 3: Evaluation of strategies to improve effectiveness was a decisional outcome. Finding 3 related to question 3 indicated that an evaluation of strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school along with improved ISS and parental involvement. Three participants felt that the number of written referrals had decreased, and eight participants thought there were some visible signs of a difference in discipline; the hallways were much quieter, and the common areas seem more orderly. The data showed that there were fewer students receiving out-of-school suspensions however data revealed an increase in students receiving an in-school suspension consequence. Still

there were participants who thought that the strategies have not been evaluated to the point of revealing a significant decrease in discipline problems.

The need for improving the in-school suspension strategy to decrease discipline issues was expressed by all participants. Participants revealed that the use of the strategy lacked consistency and structure or rigor which is essential in order for the in school suspension strategy to be effective. One participant thought the students' perception of this strategy as a "country club", a place where they could meet with their classmates to "just hang out". Other comments such as over-crowded, lack of control, appears to be a social meeting place, and students requesting to go to ISS were expressed about the strategy. It was the consensus of all participants that in-school suspension would be beneficial and more effective if redesigned to function as originally intended. We need to develop a better plan to decrease discipline issues in the school. Still another teacher said, "Though out of school suspensions have decreased the number of in school suspensions appears to have increased". Less that 50% of participants felt that there was significant decrease whereas seven out of 12 thought that there was a slight decrease in discipline problems and felt the reason was inconsistency in implementing the strategies. Teacher 12 wondered what strategies specifically caused the slight decrease.

Parental involvement is essential to decreasing discipline problems in school. Parents must take an active role by supporting the student and school in promoting a safe environment in which to learn. Parents must be contacted on a regular basis as to what is going on with their children in school not just when something negative is happening. Regular communication may result in parent seeking to be more involved with their

children educational journey. Teacher 3 stated "I'm not sure what actually is working, I just know that everyone needs to be on the same page in order for anything to work, and that everybody should try to work together to get parents to take more responsibility and to be actively involved instead of always blaming the teacher and crying unfair". Another teacher expressed the idea that students and parents felt entitled to do whatever they wanted without consequences. One hundred percent of participants in the study indicated that greater parental involvement is needed to complete the collaborative team designed to decrease behavior issues and improve student performance. Office data also indicated the need for increased parental involvement to decrease discipline problems and improve the performance of students.

Relationship to literature. Literature clearly showed in-school suspension as an effective strategy to decrease discipline problems, however, the strategy must be implemented with consistency, selectivity, consistency, constructive supervision, student reflection, and parental involvement (Morris & Howard, 2003). Effective programs must include a structured environment, supervision, consequences that are defined and clear, modification of behavior, and commitment (Morris & Howard, 2003). The premise of in school suspension is to "discipline" students for in appropriate behavior while continuing to keep them involved in the educational setting (Morris & Howard, 2003). Everyone in the school setting involved with students must be involved and supportive of all aspects of the strategy (Sanders, 2001). It was consistently noted that in-school suspension was helpful however, did not meet the needs of the school and was a vital program that

needed to be restructured in order for it to maximize its effectiveness. The existing literature was consistent with the finding.

Literature indicated that parental involvement in the students' educational life decreases as the child gets older when in reality should be the opposite, getting more involved as the years pass (Bridgemohan, van Wyk, & van Staden, 2005; Halsey, 2005). Feuerstein (2000) contended that there also must be a trust building factor between schools and parents to motivate more parental involvement. Literature suggested parental involvement as being important in decreasing the discipline gap as well as the achievement gap (Hill & Chao, 2009; Seginer, 2006). A fundamental factor needed for parent involvement is constant communication (Bridgemohan et al., 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Additionally, a study on parental involvement by Hill and Tyson (2009), stressed the significance parental involvement plays in the middle school arena to help maximize student potential. Therefore there is a considerable amount of literature that confirms the importance of parents being involved in the educational process of their children on all levels. The school has been encouraging parents to take a more active role in the educational experience of their children beyond the primary grades expressed teacher 12. Visible posters encouraging parents to come into visit the classrooms were present in the school lobby.

Relationship to conceptual framework. In communities of practice theory working together to address problems is a major component in order for an idea or strategy to be effective and successful as well as a way for people to learn together in order to get better results. The social learning theory supports the contention that students

cultivate behavioral habits through observation (Thomas, 2005). Kinsler (2009b)

contended that when student behavior and achievement are modeled collectively,

suspensions dissuade students from misbehavior. The in-school suspension must be

designed to have a clear purpose and expectations, provide an academic and counseling

component, and include the involvement of parents in order to be most effective in

helping to decrease discipline problems in the school.

Since modeling is one of the major components of the social learning theory

parents being involved with school practices allows students to see the cooperation

between the school and home to encourage the success of the student, not only

academically, but socially also.

Discrepant Cases

After analyzing all data from interviews and documentary data, a discrepancy was

uncovered. A consistently negative finding was the use of out of school suspension.

According to Teacher 7, out of school suspension is the least used strategy and should be

used more often to decrease school discipline problems. The teacher felt that the students

needed a strong warning to let them know that the school means business and will not

tolerate inappropriate behavior. The literature did not reveal the concept of out of school

suspension as helpful or effective in decreasing discipline problems. Research showed

that most students who are given out of school suspension view the consequence as a

vacation or holiday (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2006; Dupper, Theriot, & Craun,

2009). Research also showed that students who are suspended from school run the risk of

being repeat offenders, may be left alone to their own devises, and tend to get in more trouble (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008).

Another discrepancy was the fact that teachers thought the in-school suspension program was not successful. Although the program was implemented several teachers felt the strategy to be a reward to students rather than a consequence. The literature described the strategy as being effective and successful; however, it must be properly structured to yield positive results (Morris & Howard, 2003). The strategy must be conducted with rigor and consistency and it takes the cooperation of the classroom teacher and the in-school suspension teacher in order for the strategy to be successful and powerful. Research also showed an in-school suspension program/strategy keeps students in school and actively participating in learning process rather than out on the streets possibly getting into even more serious trouble (Bailey, 2015; Skiba, Trachok, Chung, Baker, Sheya, & Hughes, 2013; Vernberg & Gamm, 2003).

Even though teachers implemented the strategies many perceived themselves as ill-equipped in doing so. Teachers consistently mentioned training was necessary in order to administer strategies successfully and effectively. Research showed proper training yields confidence in executing the strategies selected to decrease discipline problems in schools (Frey, Lingo, & Nelson, 2008; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009).

Evidence of Quality

In order to adhere to the standard of ethical guidelines for collecting data, no collection was begun until full approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee and the chair of my committee. Following the guidelines

protected against human rights violations. All participants received a consent form with explanations and a full review prior to signing. Careful to abide by the ethical guidelines, all questions and concerns were addressed so that participants fully understood my role in the study, the purpose of the study, participation is voluntary, no compensation will be given, and the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were also assured that all information would be kept confidential. No interviews were conducted without a signed form of consent.

Member checking

Member checking is a strategy implemented in qualitative research that uses the participants to check the interpretation of the interviews conducted (Calebrese, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The member checking process was conducted to assure that the transcription is what the interviewee actually expressed during the interview (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Each transcript was delivered in person for the participants to review. The participants were encouraged to review and if necessary make corrections to the transcript. One participant further detailed an experience with a disruptive student which was inserted into the interview. The majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the transcription of the interviews and submitted no supplementary erudition. Once all parties completed review of the transcript for accuracy, participants initialed the transcript indicating approval. Documentary data, school reports, and referral print out reports were used for triangulation to confirm the data being provided. Through interviews, and documentary data and records data was confirmed.

Triangulation

Triangulation is another important strategy used in qualitative research to confirm validity and credibility by helping to provide a broader and deeper understanding of events and actions and by analyzing research questions from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Olsen, 2004; Stake, 2010). The four criteria for evaluating the validity/trustworthiness of a qualitative research study were identified by Trochim (2006) including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm ability. Additionally, Merriam (2009) characterized triangulation as "using several investigators, sources of data or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings" (p. 229). The collection of data from a variety of teachers, counselors, administrators, and specialists along with documentary data allowed for the triangulation of the information gathered. The diversity of participants selected to participate in the study provided unique perspectives of strategies, implementation of strategies, and outcomes of strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school, thus providing more than one interpretation as opposed to just a single point of view. Triangulation afforded me the opportunity to substantiate the gathered data consequently increasing the validity of the study. I was also able to corroborate the findings from all data sources therefore diminishing the impact of possible predisposition.

Collegial Review

A chairperson and several committee members comprised the collegial review and were responsible for channeling me through the course of the study and served as the dissertation committee. The process of consistent and deliberate communication with the

chair and committee members was well established. The relations assisted me in viewing the research from different perspectives and resulted in scholarly work throughout the study. The chairperson and committee members are current members of the Walden University community.

The literature was used to review scholarly works and researchers as they studied discipline, student behavior issues, and strategies to decrease discipline problems in schools so the learning environment will be safe and productive for students and teachers. The literature set the broader context of the study by helping to explain and or identify what was already known about the subject matter of decreasing school discipline, identifying strengths and weaknesses of previous research, and to inform practices. Finally the literature was used to gain a richer understanding of methodologies and theories connected to the research study thus improving the quality of the study, making the study sound and the methods approved.

Conclusion

Section 4 provides information regarding generating, gathering, and recording data along with an explanation of the system used for tracking data. The findings were expressed as a reflection of the research questions. Interview data were classified using the social learning theory and the communities of practice theory as a conceptual framework. Discrepant cases and non-confirming data were presented as rival explanations in comparison to research findings and literature. Finally, giving an explanation of the procedures used provided evidence of the quality of the findings. In Section 5, discussion will include conclusions, recommendation, commentary and

summary of the case study along with providing implications for social change. The

interpretation of the interviews and documentary data has been presented in section 4.

The data presented describes how the local school addressed discipline issues. The

overarching goal of the study was to provide the local school with empirically grounded

evidence that informs school practices and policies on student discipline issues and to

contribute to the existing scholarship on school discipline and classroom management

challenges.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

Discipline problems are considered one of the biggest problems facing schools, second only to lack of funding (Budshaw & McNee, 2009). Discipline problems created unsafe school environments and take away from instructional time. The NCLB (2002) is an educational reform law that focuses attention on improving education in the United States. NCLB legislation requires schools to establish a safe environment for students, school staff, and parents (NCLB, 2002). In meeting the federal mandate, schools have attempted to decrease discipline issues using many different strategies.

This research study was conducted to investigate the strategies used by a pre-K-8 elementary school to decrease discipline problems. In this case study, interview data were collected from 12 participants. The participants in the study were all educators working in the capacities of administrator, counselor, teacher, or specialist. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and delivered to the participants for member checking. The research questions were used in interviewing the participants to better understand the phenomenon. The research questions, the findings related to the research questions, a discussion of how the finding are consistent with existing literature, and the relationship of the findings to social learning theory and communities of practice theory follow.

Interpretation of Findings Conclusions

The findings of this case study were addressed in the three research questions. The literature review served as the framework to gathering understanding of themes and

patterns that materialized from this study. The following conclusions were derived from

data and findings.

Conclusion 1: Various types of discipline problems existed within the local setting

resulting in the need to decrease occurrences of inappropriate behavior.

Data gathered from interviews of participants indicated several student discipline

problems existed in the school including fighting, bullying, disrespect of authority, and

non compliance or willful disobedience. A theme that resonated with most teachers and

the documentary data was the lack of respect for those in authority. Teachers spoke of

students disregarding the authority of those in charge by using inappropriate language

such as cursing, talking back, yelling, and making threats. Teachers also reflected on

bullying as a problem even though the school has a zero tolerance policy on bullying with

the incorporation of the H.I.B. policy. The transcripts were clear and indicated

noncompliance/willful disobedience as a major concern for teachers also. Teachers spoke

of the home and community environment as being influential in the behaviors of students

and the changes that needed to be made in school to turn the behaviors around.

Relationship to literature. Existing literature showed that disrespect for

authority, fighting, bullying, and non compliance are major discipline problems existing

in many schools across the United States (School Violence, 2008). Bullying in most

schools has become so widespread and common that local schools, as well as local, state,

federal government, are adopting policies specifically designed to discourage bullying

and consequences that send a message that it will not be tolerated (Neiman, Robers, &

Robers, 2012; School Violence, 2008). Documentary data verified the types of discipline

problems that were present in the school and also corroborated data collected during interviews indicating these to be problems at the K-8 school.

Relationship to conceptual framework. Bandura's social learning theory was valid for examining behavior exhibited by children in the school. Social learning theory implied what children are exposed to is what they do. Children tend to model what they see, as evidenced by the experiment with the Bobo dolls where students observed violence and later acted out that which they observed (Bandura, 1977; Ormrod, 2011; Thomas, 2005). The communities of practice theory describes many domains, meaning students may be involved in many different groups that will effect learning whether socially or academically and will practice what they learn whether good or bad (Nelson et al., 2002; Wenger, 2007).

Conclusion 2: Multiple strategies for addressing discipline proved to be more effective than singular strategies.

Research Question 2 asked what strategies were developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems, why were those strategies chosen, who were the targets of the strategies, and who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies and their roles and responsibilities. Strategies such as Character Education, team collaboration, detentions, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspensions were used to decrease the discipline problems in the pre-K-8 elementary school. The strategies were documented in school reports and referrals and were chosen because of the flexibility of severity. The participants indicated that the targets for the strategies were for all students in order to decrease discipline problems in the school. According to

participants, those involved in the development of strategies included the school leadership team encompassing teachers, administrators, counselors, specialists, and district members in order for all stakeholders to assume ownership of the strategies. According to participants of the study, teachers, security, and administrators conducted the implementation of the strategies.

The Character Education strategy carried a reward system with it where the teachers selected students who exhibited the character trait of the month to be recognized; the team collaboration strategy afforded teachers and other interested parties (including parents, students, counselors, and administrators) the opportunity to come together on the student's behalf to find a solution for the discipline problem and to convey academic challenges the student may also be experiencing. Detentions, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspensions were punitive strategies employed by the school that participants deemed necessary for the more severe infractions. All strategies played a role in decreasing the behavior issues aforementioned; however, there was a slight decrease of out-of-school suspensions and an increase of in-school suspensions noted.

Relationship to literature. Previously published literature contained many strategies available to promote better behavior in school. Some have been evaluated to be effective and still others have been evaluated to be less effective in reducing discipline issues in schools. Research has shown effective strategies such as character education and team collaboration to be effective strategies because they promote positive behavior in students (Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009; Menzies & Bruhn, 2010). Out-of-school suspension, according to research, is not an effective strategy because it causes students

to absent out of school and subsequently miss valuable instruction, which could lead to students being left to their own devices, creating even more serious problems (Adams, 2000; Garner, & Garner, 2008; Lashley & Tate, 2009). Research also showed that in-school suspension has the potential to be effective if it is implemented with rigor and integrity, meaning it should be a well thought-out plan to include academic work and behavior modification (Bloomberg, 2004; Verdugo, 2002).

Relationship to conceptual framework. The development and implementation of strategies as well as those involved and their roles were classified by the communities of practice components that include *domain*, *communities*, and *practice*. The *domain* classified the persons, and the roles of those selecting and developing the strategies and selecting the targeted population. The *communities* helped to describe the involvement of those persons in the selection process of strategies. The *practice* helped to describe the implementation by stakeholders of the strategies. Communities of practice theory showed the importance of understanding how the components are intertwined and allow the members of the group to work together to finds solutions to problems (Ricci & Rogers, 2004).

Conclusion 3: The utility of the research design was valid and consistent.

Research design was very important as it puts in order the appropriate framework within which the research study will be carried out. The research design operated as an outline for conducting the research study. The qualitative research approach was the design selected particularly case study. The case study approach allowed the use of a small group for the exploration of a specific activity explicitly that of investigating

strategies used to decrease discipline problems at a local site. The case was bounded by time and explicit data was collected using a number of courses of action including interviews and documentary data retrieval. Several themes emerge from the data that was collected. The study was limited to a small group of participants and was conducted at a single site. Therefore, generalizing the results to other schools beyond the local setting may be limited.

Relationship to the literature. Research revealed the importance of selecting an appropriate research design before beginning the research because it affects the entire study. The research design appertain to the structure of an enquiry a logical not a logistical matter. It seeks to answer the initial research question and minimize incorrect inferences from data (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). One must know what is to be researched or studied before a plan of action can be set to accomplish the goal. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to use interviews, documentary data, and reports to understand the phenomena being researched. A single case study allowed the focus to be on a specific event or phenomenon for a specified time period (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012; Yin, 2009).

Relationship to the conceptual framework. Bandura's social learning theory was appropriate for examining the small group, specific populations, and Bandura's social learning theory was appropriate for examining behavior. The communities of practice theory was used in conjunction with specific methods to ensure the correctness of the research design.

The Interpretation of the Findings

Because this case study is bounded to a single site there are a few practical applications for decreasing the discipline problems the school that may or may not be applicable or generalizable to other schools. The findings of the study may be continually implemented at the local setting in order to continue decreasing discipline problems. Strategies may need to be re-evaluated, should there be a change in student population, teachers, administrators, and other personnel. Additionally, the findings from the study could be used as a pivotal or fundamental point for similar schools with like concerns of decreasing discipline issues. Those responsible for identifying strategies to cause change would have additional information to help identify, explore, and understand the strategies used to decrease discipline problems.

Finally, this case study could be useful in professional development institutes, workshops, seminars, and staff meetings to provide teachers, administrators, and other support personnel a better understanding of the type of strategies available for use to decrease discipline problems in the school setting. Parents would additionally benefit from attending workshop to explain the strategies used to decrease discipline issues in order to ensure a safe environment for students to learn.

The Implications for Positive Social Change

Further understanding school practices and policies on discipline issues allow administrators, teachers, and counselors to better serve students to facilitate the production of productive citizens in the school and community environment by addressing and reforming educational systems at the institutional level. The National

School Climate Council (2009) stressed that a sustainable, positive school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a democratic society. The local school benefited from the study by attaining a better understanding of how the school was able to decrease discipline problems through first identifying the types of discipline issues and then selecting, developing, and implementing strategies to reduce the problem. Educators will be able to explore the strategies mentioned in the study to determine whether or not the strategies will be feasible at their local school. Decreasing discipline problems will assist schools in their quest to provide a safe environment for students to learn and for teachers to instruct as required by the NCLB Act. The implications for positive social change included creating a repertoire of strategies the local setting and other school may use to decrease discipline issues and create a safe learning environment for students, school staff, and parents.

<p style="text-align:center">Recommendations for Action</p>

The case study showed that schools must be specific in their selection and implementation of strategies in order to decrease discipline problems. The recommendations for action were developed from the findings, conclusions and literature.

Recommendation 1: Select strategies as a team effort and include those who will be responsible for implementing them.

Implementation is more effective when persons are able to take ownership for the selection, creation and development of the strategies to decrease discipline (Blum, 2005; Sun, & Shek, 2012). Getting stakeholders involved in the process allows ownership to

occur. The staff members at the pre-K-8 elementary school who actively took part in the

brainstorming and developing stages readily encouraged their colleagues to get on board

with the implementation of the strategies selected and assisted colleagues wherever

needed to help promote success of the selected strategies. Afford all stakeholders,

including but not limited to teachers, administrators, and counselors, the opportunity to

provide information and insight as to their perceptions of the behavior problems that exist

in the school through interviews questionnaires, and or surveys. Personal interviews

allowed persons to share valuable information about the existing issues that may not be

so obvious yet create behavior problems. It is evidenced through literature that it is vital

to identify the discipline problems that exist in order to be able to develop strategies to

decrease them.

Recommendation 2: Strategies should be selected that fit the population and the discipline issues/problems that exist in the school.

The importance of selecting strategies that are appropriate is crucial. Strategies

should be consistent, fair, and correspond to the severity of the offense in order to ensure

effectiveness. Even though a few of the strategies were mandated by the local school

board, the school selected additional strategies that were suitable to help decrease

discipline issues at the school.

Recommendation 3: School personnel should regularly analyze and evaluate the data to discover the effectiveness or ineptitude of the strategies.

When data is assessed and diagnosed, strategies can be modified, or even

eliminated in order to meet the needs of the school and the population. The study

revealed that participants felt the in-school suspension strategy was appropriate however ineffective in its present implementation. Terms such as vacation club, country club, and hang out room were used to describe in-school suspension. Students did not view the strategy as an action to curb behavior instead it was viewed as a place to go when you didn't want to conform to the rules of the school. The literature revealed that the in-school suspension strategy is most effective when conducted with rigor and consistency. It will take the cooperation of the classroom teachers, administrators, and the in-school suspension teacher to help the strategy to maximize potential efficacy. The assignment of a qualified and effective instructor and collaboration with specific teachers and administrators will enable the strategy to produce the intended results.

Recommendation for Future Research

The case study revealed discipline strategies used should be specific to the needs of schools experiencing discipline problems. This case study was executed at an urban K-8 school and possibly may be utilized as a framework for further studies at similar elementary and middle school to decrease discipline problems. Recommendations for further study were gleaned from data collected and evaluated regarding strategies used to decrease discipline problems in schools are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Conduct research study on strategy combinations that effectively decrease discipline problems.

A plethora of literature is available comparing one strategy with another strategy and evaluating individual strategies; however, literature was limited that is focused on combinations of strategies that work well together. Several schools use a combination of

strategies to decrease discipline problems without knowing if the combination is the reason for success of, or failure, to ameliorate discipline issues. Educators would attain a greater understanding of strategies to decrease discipline. The data could be presented to administrators to further identify what combination of strategies is most effective in reducing discipline problems. The recommendation potentially will strengthen the results of the study and add to the current body of knowledge on strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school.

Recommendation 2: Conduct a quantitative study on the decrease of discipline problems in schools.

Understanding and determining critical behavior problems will further assist schools in curbing discipline problems. Using a quantitative approach will identify the severity of each discipline problems and the amount of reduction as well as disclose if any particular behavior problem is on the rise so that school personnel can address the issue in a more timely fashion. A quantitative study will give all stakeholders a greater opportunity to evaluate the existing problems and promote further discussion as to additional solutions. Recommendation 2 will build upon the results of this study and add to the current body of knowledge.

Recommendation 3: Research professional development of teachers regarding effective discipline in the classroom and school.

It was discovered through this study that many teachers felt they lacked training in implementing the strategies selected. Not all teachers implemented the strategies in the same manner. Research shows a lack of teacher training on how to handle discipline

issues in the school. A few weeks of student teaching fails to give the teacher the proper tools needed to handle discipline problems in school especially if there were no discipline issues during the assigned practical teaching internship. Teachers need constant and continuous training as the population of students, cultures, and environments change. Another reason why teachers should have ongoing training is because the school and federal laws often change. Teachers are the first to deal with student issues and must be equipped to do so.

Recommendation 4: Further research should be conducted to obtain parents and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of strategies implemented to decrease discipline problems.

No mention of the perceptions of the student body concerning strategies used to promote good behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior were included in this study. Conducting a survey to see what the students and their parents/guardians thought about the strategies being used would bring a different perspective to the study. Research shows involvement of all affected parties may bring about additional insights and new developments to better promote positive behavior and further decrease discipline problems in the schools. Research also shows student perception is quite different from the perception of teachers and parents. Additionally, the perception of parents regarding discipline will present another valuable point of view building upon the outcome of this study and further contribute to the current body of knowledge.

Reflections from the Researcher

Prior to collecting data, my perception of decreasing discipline problems was that of teachers merely implementing the strategies adopted by the school and hoping for the best. I believed that not all teachers were implementing the strategies with the same integrity and that many did not know exactly what to do or how to implement the strategies. Teachers were frustrated because of what they perceived to be lack of positive results to decrease discipline. I discovered that there were teachers who felt a lack of support from administration when a discipline referral was submitted to the office for review and action. Additionally, my perception prior to collecting data was that school discipline should include some punitive consequences. However, in evaluating the data it was found that positive behavior strategies appeared to result in positive behavior and negative strategies resulted in more negative behavior. The findings were consistent with the literature substantiating the results I understand that decreasing the discipline problems is really about helping students learn to make right choices to become better equipped to meet the challenges of society.

I also was surprised to see that even though the participants were passionate about fighting being the major discipline problem in the school, the data revealed that the most prevalent discipline problem aligned with the literature as being disrespect to those in authority.

During the interview process, I also discovered that other teachers were also seeking ways to help decrease discipline problems in the school, which helped me to develop a rapport with them and allowed them to express their thoughts without

reservation. Teachers genuinely have a common goal of wanting to help students reach their greatest potential; therefore teachers are looking for efficacious ways to decrease discipline issues and increase crucial instructional time to meet that goal. With the ever increasing demands on educators to raise achievement test scores and prepare students to compete in the global world, schools must be able to manage discipline problems effectively. By developing and implementing successful strategies to decrease discipline problems in the school, staff can spend more time on reaching academic goals through increased instructional time.

The research study has been a revelation, and I have been influenced by the existing empirical literature. In my present position as part of the school leadership team, I will be able to share the results of the study with the team, administrators, school board members, parents, and students, and make recommendations to further decrease discipline problems.

After the completion of the study, the research questions were revisited and found to be relevant providing the stakeholders with empirically grounded evidence as to the subject matter of decreasing discipline in the preK-8 school. All assumptions were substantiated in the study.

Summary/Conclusion

Violence seems to be escalating at an alarming rate in schools across the country thus creating an unsafe environment for students, teachers and other personnel. However, even though discipline problems appear to be increasing within the local schools, this pre-K-8 elementary school decreased discipline problems through a series of strategies.

Teachers, administrators, counselors, and specialist worked together to identify strategies, implement the strategies, and evaluate the strategies for their effectiveness in decreasing discipline problems at the school. The study was able to provide the school with empirically grounded evidence of strategies used to decrease discipline problems. The school was able to identify the specific strategies used to decrease discipline problems and now will be further able to effectively analyze those strategies to determine their effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Upon evaluation, the school will be able to make informed recommendations as to the continuance of a specific strategy or the need to select additional strategies in order to further decrease discipline problems at the pre-K-8 elementary. This study revealed that strategies must be selected carefully, implemented properly, and then evaluated thoroughly in order to decrease discipline in schools.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

March 14, 2014

Re: Doctoral Study

My name is Wendy Mason and I am a current doctoral candidate at Walden University. My area of specialization is Teacher Leadership. As part of the doctoral program, I must conduct an independent research study that will be the basis for my final research paper.

In my research study, I will be conducting a case study at an elementary school to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school to decrease student discipline problems.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. In order to collect data for this study, you will be interviewed for approximately 30 to 45 minutes regarding strategies used in an urban elementary school in the to decrease student discipline problems. Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that all information provided by you will remain strictly confidential and your name and/or the school's name will not appear in any report or document. In addition, the interview will take place at a time that is most convenient for you.

If you would like to participate in this study or, if you should have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email at Wendy.Mason@waldenu.edu.

A consent form will be provided detailing the rights and responsibilities of participants in the study. I will contact you to set up an appointment to go over and sign the consent form. Please note that participants will not receive benefits for choosing to take part in the study or penalties for choosing not to participate in the study. Choosing to participate is always voluntary.

My doctoral chairperson's name is Dr. Wallace Southerland, III, and he can be contacted via email at Wallace.Southerland@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration. I look forward to your anticipated response.

Sincerely,

Wendy Mason
Ed.D. Student

Appendix B: Explanation of the Study

January 10, 2014

Dear

Presently, I am an Ed. Student at Walden University pursuing Teacher Leadership as my area of specialization. My interest is in conducting a case study to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school to decrease student discipline problems.

Please find attached to this letter, a detailed summary of the research study explaining further the purpose of the study. I endeavor to explore, identify, and understand the strategies used to decrease discipline problems in an elementary school setting.

Thank you for granting me permission to interview you during the research process. Upon agreeing to participate, you were provided with a consent form acknowledging your rights and responsibilities as a participant in the study. Participants will not receive benefits for choosing to take part in the study or penalties for not participating in the study. Choosing to participate is always voluntary. The interview data will be reviewed with you and necessary changes made before using the information in the final study. Proper protocol to protect your identity and security procedures to safeguard all information will be executed to ensure confidentiality.

I look forward to your participation in this research study and again thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely;

Wendy Mason

Appendix C: Research Summary

Title	Strategies used to Decrease Student Discipline Issues in School
Research Site	Major League Elementary School (Fictional Name)
Summary of Problem Statement	The educational problem addressed in this study is a lack of empirically-grounded evidence of the strategies used by a single urban school in the northeast region of the United States to decrease school discipline problems.
Purpose	The principal purpose of this study is to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school in the northeastern part of the United States to decrease student discipline problems. The overarching goal of the study is to provide the local school with empirically-grounded evidence that informs school practices and policies on student discipline issues and to contribute to the existing scholarship on school discipline and classroom management challenges.

Research Questions	1. What types of student discipline problems existed in the school?
	
	2. What strategies were developed and deployed to decrease the student discipline problems?
	    a. Why were those strategies chosen?
	    b. Who were the targets of the strategies?
	    c. Who was involved in the development and implementation of the strategies and what were their roles and responsibilities?
	
	3. What were the behavioral, reputational, decisions, or other outcomes of the strategies?

Targeted Participants	Interview participants • Principal • Assistant Principals • Counselors • Teachers
Projected Data Collection Period	March 2014

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of strategies used in an urban elementary school to decrease student discipline problems. You were chosen for the study because of your experience and position and because you were directly or indirectly involved in strategies used to decrease discipline problems. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Wendy Mason who is a doctoral student at Walden University and presently a fourth grade reading and social studies teacher.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify, explore, and understand the strategies used in an urban elementary school to decrease student discipline problems.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Sign a consent form.

- Respond to interview questions. . The interviews will last 30-45 minutes and will be audio recorded with your permission.

- Review transcriptions from interview data and provide feedback within ten days if changes need to be made. Process will take approximately 20-30 minutes to review.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at the school site or school district will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind at a later date. If you feel stressed during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits:

There will be minimal risk involved in participating in the study; however, your participation in this study will help to support the validity of the findings in this research

study. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions if anything appears uncertain. All of your responses will be confidential.

This form is the only one that will have your name on it, and it will be separated from the rest of the packet once it is handed in. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without consequences. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

The anticipated benefits of this research will be to assist schools, administrators, teachers, and counselors in making better-informed decisions regarding discipline, and to provide the local school with empirically-grounded evidence that inform school practices and policies on student discipline issues. The study will be also significant to all stakeholders at the local school level where decreasing discipline and increasing instructional time is needed.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for being in the study.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contact and Questions:

The researcher's name is Wendy Mason. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Wallace Southerland III. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Wendy Mason at Wendy.Mason@Waldenu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a subject in this study, or want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, please contact Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210.
The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent form to keep for your personal records.

Statement of Consent:

☐have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I believe I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the study.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of Consent

_____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

_____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally,

an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Name: _____ Pseudonym: _____ Date: _____

1. What were the student discipline problems that existed in the school?

2. What were the strategies that were used to decrease the student discipline problems?

3. Why do you think those particular strategies were selected or chosen?

4. Who were the targets of the strategies?

5. What individuals were involved in the development of the strategies?

6. What were the roles of those involved?

7. What were their responsibilities?

8. What individuals implemented the strategies?

9. What were the behavioral outcomes of the strategies?

10. What were the reputational outcomes of the strategies?

11. How were the strategies evaluated to determine the impact of decreasing student discipline problems?

12. Do you have any additional insights to share to better understand the strategies used to decrease student discipline problems?

Appendix F: Interview Form

Name: _____ Pseudonym: _____ Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Total Time: _____

Interview Questions	Responses	Analytical Features/ Emerging Themes
What were the student discipline problems that existed in the school?		
What were the strategies that were used to decrease the student discipline problems?		
Why do you think those particular strategies were selected or chosen?		
Who were the targets of the strategies?		
What individuals were involved in the development of the strategies?		
What were the roles of those involved?		
What were their responsibilities?		
What individuals implemented the strategies?		
What were the behavioral outcomes of the strategies?		
What were the reputational outcomes of the strategies?		
How were the strategies evaluated to determine the impact of decreasing student discipline problems?		