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# Parents' and Teachers' Perception of an Alternative School

Larry Lee Adams  
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# Walden University

College of Education

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Larry Lee Adams

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2018

Perspectives of Parents and Teachers of an Alternative School Program

By

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MS. North Carolina A&T State University, 2001

Med. North Carolina A&T State University, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

of Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

The alternative school in this case study has experienced resistance to the assignments the past few years. Present enrollment consists mostly of African American male students, whose parents complain about constant fighting, inadequate educational resources and the lack of class selections necessary for student academic progress. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding academic information, and general information, they perceived have had the greatest impact on behavior, discipline, and achievement in the school environment. In addition, parents' primary concerns about student assignment to the alternative school were explored. Constructivist learning theory was used to guide the study and research questions addressed the perspectives of teachers and parents about best practices concerning the behavior and academic achievement problems among black males attending the school. Data collection included interviews with 20 past and present parents and 15 teachers selected using purposive sampling. Data analyses involved using Hatch's nine-step typology to code data and analyze for common themes. The results indicated that the alternative school has generally been successful in promoting student achievement and facilitating correct behaviors of assigned students. However, parents' views differed regarding with the school environment. To address these differences, a professional development project was developed that included working with teacher, parent and student perspectives regarding academics and behavior concerns that were affecting the functioning of the school. Positive social change might occur as stakeholders realize the return of alternative school students to the educational environment who have the potential to be productive members of the community.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

Local civic leaders and clergy have continued to discuss the problems in addressing behavior, discipline, and achievement especially among African American male students assigned to the local alternative school. Parents are reluctant in sending their children because of these issues and the lack of available resources based on their own perceptions. This alternative school located in North Carolina is where the study was conducted. Parents of students assigned to this school, have reported constant fighting among students, inadequate educational resources, lack of achievement, and a disproportionate assignment of African American male students. This has resulted in the refusal of some parents from enrolling students at the study site. According to the district hearing officer's assignment letter, some students were argumentative and had a confrontational style of communication. Based on the enrollment information, assignment letters and of students' parents' socio-economic status, many were from nontraditional families, who were unemployed, any of which could have been among the many factors contributing to their discontent with authority figures.

The traditional school administrators recommended alternative school placement for students who had disruptive or confrontational social interactions. SCALE, enrolls students from fifteen high schools, twelve middle colleges, and twenty-one middle schools. Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2001) indicated that students' misbehavior often results from unmet physical, emotional, or social needs.

The school met the standards of State of North Carolina Alternative Learning Procedures (2014) that made the program more effective and a viable resource for middle and high schools as a student option by the county board of education.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for this case study was based on limited research and the need of additional research of parents and teachers' perceptions of alternative schools. Eisenberg and Spinrad (2004) indicated that by employing emotional self-regulation as a behavior, students adjust their emotional state by decreasing the intensity or anxiety of a provoking event. Anger management or self-control is another way of describing such regulation. Barish (2016) described emotional regulation as what helps children control their temper when they use strategies such as talking about their problem, rather than ineffective methods like arguing, fighting, or being confrontational in a disruptive way. Emotion regulation is a means of helping children reach an acceptable outcome in the face of an emotionally charged situation (Eisenberg, Champion, & Ma, 2004). This is important because current knowledge in both neuroscience and genomics suggest that children's experiences and relationships have lasting influences on learning, behavior, and health (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2011). Certain stressors such as witnessing parents worrying about finances, lack of food, or difficult living conditions can also influence emotions negatively.

Jencks (1992) found that strategies for preventing and dealing with inappropriate behavior by African American male students were culturally insensitive, and that this contributed to suspensions in the school district. It suggests that the behaviors of

minorities are subject to a variety of meanings strongly influenced by socioeconomic status and cultural circumstances. Jencks pointed to the lack of understanding by authority figures when identifying problems. According to the Groundwater Analysis: Examining the Prevalence of Racial Inequity (Love, 2017), African American male students in Guilford County school system suspensions lost a total of nineteen thousand, five hundred seventy-seven instructional hours, equating to approximately one hundred and twenty-nine points six instructional days for every one hundred African American male students enrolled. In 2010, of the four thousand, one hundred and twenty-nine male students suspended, two thousand, six hundred and seventy were African American. In the district's school system, African American male students constituted approximately 21 % of the student population but were assigned to the district's alternative school with fifty-seven percent of the discipline referrals and suspensions. The North Carolina General Assembly Report # 41-43, (2016, p. 38) revealed that overall, African-American and multiracial male students comprised the highest rate of long-term suspensions for the years 2014-2015.

Jordan and Cooper (2003) agreed that there continues to be achievement gap between affluent and poor subgroups, as well as between White and Black subgroups. Parke and Ladd (2016) found that children who endured family economic hardship outwardly expressed their emotions through negative behavior. Some of the negative behaviors began as minor issues, but escalated to major confrontations between children or between children and adults. Guthrie, Kleindorfer, Levin, and Stout (1970) posited that children, comprehending what is occurring in their environment, express that

comprehension in diverse ways, at different rates, and to varying degrees. What schools do to enhance this comprehension affects a student's ability to perceive, store, process, and respond to a variety of environmental inputs. Wilson (1990) asserted that other stressors included low aspirations, poor education, family instability, illegitimacy, unemployment, crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, illness and early death and that these factors accepted, in certain low-income communities where adolescents lie and prey on the weak or elderly, or cheat or steal from their family or neighbors. This is a regular occurrence in some neighborhoods on the part of those from such subcultures.

Students were exposed to violence at an early age influenced by their parents struggle for survival in certain neighborhoods (Damm & Dustmann, 2012, p.1). This is just one ongoing problem in the public schools and depending on the severity of the disruption— whether weapons are involved, the extent of any injuries, and possible arrests—can result in whether suspension is necessary, or assignment to the alternative school is needed. Decisions on the length of student assignments to the alternative school, may vary from several weeks to the remainder of the school year, were dependent on the type of violation(s).

The social development of children varies and is affected by such factors as environmental influences and level of maturity including the ability to manage emotions. According to the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), a self-assessment instrument, and Roemer (2004), differences in children's achievement later in life depends on family backgrounds and educational equity. There are various levels of awareness, acceptance and comfort of emotions for children (Wu, 2017; Gratz & Roemer

(2004). There are also six specific factors that should be assessed: (a) non-acceptance of emotional responses, (b) difficulty engaging in goal-oriented behaviors, (c) difficulty controlling impulses, (d) lack of emotional awareness, (e) lack of access to emotion regulation strategies, and (f) lack of emotional clarity. A teacher's awareness of children's developmental needs can facilitate the roles of both adult and students in the classroom. Brown and Beckett (2007) explained that the concept of learning from the biological/maturity view focused on how children develop. Tovey and Share (2003) stated that psychological and sociological factors are the root causes in the absence of parental love, affection, and dedication, any of which also frustrates the need and ability to belong. Absenteeism was a major contributory factor to school failure. Brown and Beckett (2007) also argued that dropouts are surrounded by a community of early leavers, including peers and parents. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1993) indicated that emotions are complex social interactions that if effectively used, can produce rewarding outcomes such as friendship and relationship building, which suggests that emotions and cognition are interrelated. Social behaviors and decisions are perceived by the child in different interactions are affected by these emotions. Such interactions include daily and routine activities, such as competition among peers that may involve playing distinct roles. Wisner, Jones, and Gwin (2009) posited that mediation in a school-based setting offer a unique way of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral practice for children. This coping strategy proved beneficial. Cultural influences impact children's understanding of their environment by accepting and

developing selective exposure to different situations. Some cultural groups may express some emotions more than others (Tsai, Levenson, & McCoy, 2006).

### **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the academic achievement problems among African American male students. Also, what essential practices teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline and achievement. In addition, what are the parent's primary concerns about student's assignment to the alternative school.

This study is significant in the context of focusing on an intentional process including professional development of culturally reformed discipline. The project study included a three-day workshop and training session with administrators, parents, and teachers with the aim of engaging and understanding African American male students. The workshop is intended to provide culturally relevant information concerning available resources.

The Smith-Harper Report (2015, p.38) explained that African American students have 64% suspensions in the Guilford County Schools, which also includes only 40 % percent of the total student population. Compared to their White male counterparts, African American male students in the United States are three times as likely to be suspended, and in general have the greatest difficulty socially and academically in the education system (Civil Rights, Data Snapshot: School Discipline Report, March 2014, p.1). The results have produced negative outcomes in educational institutions, from the achievement gap to suspensions. The students assigned to this alternative school may

have been involved in negative activities, which may in turn have resulted in disruptive, violent fighting in school or the use or selling of drugs on campus. They may also have participated in other deviant behavior within their communities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the academic achievement problems among African American male students?
2. What essential practices do teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline, and academic achievement?
3. What are parents' primary concerns about assignment to the alternative school?

Whatley (2018, p.34) thought that the bias of the educational community is a contributing factor to the assessment of African American male students that results in their disproportionate suspensions and assignment to the alternative program. Bird and Bassin (2015, p.82) felt that a disproportionate representation of African Americans has been a longstanding problem in the history of education. The low-opportunity communities suffer the burdens of racial inequality, which include school disciplinary problems. Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) required that schools receiving grants had to account for the factors impact student learning and graduation rates. Data show that students were succeeding regardless of income, ethnicity, or disability. The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 (1974) was based on the belief that all students have the right to a public education. The current study also revealed that



African American male students are suspended at a rate three times greater than white male students even though they represent only 16% of the student enrollment. When examining concerns associated with the education system, a disproportionately high number of African American students are suspended each year compared to non-African American peers, according to Stovall (2017).

### **Review of the Literature**

Most of the references throughout this study were obtained from ERIC and Google Scholar electronic databases. Other electronic sources as well as printed resources included SAGE full-text collection, ProQuest, and professional peer-reviewed journals. The literature was useful when discussing alternative education. Alternative education can be defined as a program founded on the understanding that there are diverse ways of becoming educated (Nagata, 2007) or as stated by the California Department of Education, “a different means of attaining the objectives of regular education and meeting students’ needs” (2017, p. 1).

### **History of Alternative Education**

As a concept, alternative education has been around for decades, an outgrowth of ideologies that stressed egalitarianism. Colby (1972) explained that the two main philosophical approaches to education are the traditional and the progressive. The traditional approach focuses on authoritarian and hierarchical structure, while the progressive or child-centered approach emphasizes egalitarianism. Criticism of the traditional system includes its being too bureaucratic and that it establishes the exercising of authority over others, according to Rockwell (2015). In the early 1950s, there were

different educational opportunities based on race, gender, and social class. During the Civil Rights Movement, there was consistent criticism that resulted in different forms of educational institutions. Among these were schools established to assist students with learning difficulties and discipline problems (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Settles & Orwick, 2003). In *Brown vs. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), the Supreme Court ruled racial segregation in schools unconstitutional. Unfortunately, the decision did not provide a method for ending the segregation. Reynolds, Ou, and Topitzes (2004) indicated that alternative programs were considered as a mechanism of last resort for keeping students in an educational environment and were problematic due the absence of a clear definition of what constituted alternative education. It was questioned whether these programs should be expanded due to the amount of behaviorally, physically, and academically challenged students. Alternative programs grew from four hundred and sixty-four to more than five thousand and by 1975, the Presidential Commission on School Finance called for more funds (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998).

Alternative schools were designed to provide education for students who were unsuccessful in traditional public settings due to safety concerns and possible academic failure (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Settles & Orwick, 2003). Raywid (1998) noted that there were two main forms of alternative programs, both intended as a means of supporting student progress. One focused on changing student performance using a punitive style; the other used a therapeutic approach. The punitive-style programs used in today's alternative schools are intent to obtain similar results.

Alternative education serves students who have special education needs and range from short- to long-term programs. They include: (a) magnet schools, (b) contract schools, (c) residential alternative, (d) home schools, (e) internet schools, and (f) blends of high school and college institutions. Agramovich (2013) suggested that the main objective of these programs should be what was in the best interest of the students. Some potential drawbacks are the stigma associated with the reassignment of students from traditional or regular school settings (Hadderman, 1988; Mills & McGregor, 2010).

### **History of Alternative Education in North Carolina**

During the time of the Great Society programs and Civil Rights Act of 1964, educational opportunities for African Americans were supposed to increase. The State of North Carolina attempted to increase equality. Education became a priority because of number of both White and African American male students dropping out of school or not graduating were increasing. There is limited information on the history of alternative education prior to 1995, when the North Carolina General Assembly established legislation for the Department of Public Instruction to evaluate and define alternative placement. House Bill 168 took effect in July 1999, establishing guidelines for school districts wanting to implement alternative programs.

Alternative programs provided interventions designed to increase student success and decrease recidivism (Jones, 2015). Alternative education was also supposed to reduce truancy, academic failure, and behavior problems. House Bill 168 gave the Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI; 2001) authority to provide guidance to one hundred and sixty-seven charter schools and one hundred and ninety-eight public alternative learning

schools which took the form of specific policies and procedures. Each school defined its targeted student population and developed a description of its program and each given a school code.

### **Alternative Schools**

By 2018, there will be over two hundred and fifty public alternative programs in North Carolina, which have different grade levels and religious affiliations. Some are nonprofit institutions that offer behavior modification, some in residential treatment facilities. Private alternative schools serve over thirteen hundred students annually and have an entry and application process. Dunning-Lozano (2016) explored a Californian alternative school has an enrollment process like the one used by this study school district. African American male students were also significantly overrepresented at the California school. Kennedy-Lewis (2015) explained that the beliefs and philosophies of the educators were an important part of providing education to suspended students. Kennedy-Lewis felt that nonjudgmental interaction with students would create a healthy relationship with them. Further, Kennedy-Lewis posited that other educational scholars who are critical of public alternative schools, viewed alternative schools as “dumping grounds” for poor non-White youths that lacked sufficient funding and resources. In other alternative programs, the outcomes of determining effectiveness are critical. Remedial-based programs have had little effect on resolving academic and behavior challenges (Wilkerson, Afacan, Perzigian, Justin, & Lequia, 2016).

### **Assignment to an Alternative School**

Assignment to an alternative school can create a challenge for high school students who need a specific number of credits to graduate. The number of credits obtained while attending the alternative school, according to the state's requirements of twenty-two, which allows more students to graduate; thereby, reducing the dropout rate; the school district requires approximately twenty-eight credits. The school district uses the state requirement when needed.

What seemed to contribute the most to the alternative school program problem are administrative and suspension-assigned students attending school together. These assignments by the Director of Student Assignment does not take into account the possibly of conflict. The referral process to the alternative school, by the parent, is considered a public option.

For many, high school students in a large regular school, the likelihood of promotion or graduation decreases if they have difficulty with reading, comprehension, or math. For these students, a smaller environment can increase their chance of success. The available research on alternative schools is limited but does suggest that based on the students enrolled and what the programs offer and there are benefits (Franklin, Streeter, Kim, & Tripodi, 2007). There is a need to review the effects of mandatory assignments to alternative schools with different programs. Most vocational or college ready classes are not being offered at this school due to size and funding. Swindell (2006) suggested that the type of learning environment, in which students are immersed, plays a critical role in their academic progress or failure.

A number of district programs classified as alternative schools (middle colleges) provide curriculums and expectations for students but do not serve students recommended because of suspension. Hoskins (2014) expressed that alternative schools, both public and private, represented a form of unconventional education; they employed a variety of approaches and strategies for success while seeking students with common goals.

### **Alternative School Issues**

Suspension and expulsion rates are higher for African-American male students than those of White male students (Rich, 2015). Wilson (1990) explained that an antisocial and self-destructive behavior in poor Black neighborhoods may be a byproduct of economic and demographic changes over which the community and educational system has little or no control. Another relevant consideration for suspensions was that Black males and females channel their hostility and negativity toward other students engaging in school fights (Jones, 1991).

School districts across the country are losing students at an alarming rate, especially African-American male students (Jenkins, 2013). The past and present opinions of the parents and teachers concerning alternative schools became a major concern for school boards and other officials. Swanson (2004) and Salvia and Ysseldyke (2001) explained that to strengthen self-efficacy, teachers might need to select tasks within the struggling student's ability. In contrast, Cooper and Jordan (2003) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR, 2007) suggested that alternative programs effectively met the needs of at-risk students, even though some parents did not always

agree. Opposing arguments for assignments to alternative schools often focus on removing disruptive and dangerous students from the classrooms (Ellis, Rowley, Nellum, & Smith, 2013).

The Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (2001) showed that alternative programs experience a high rate of recidivism for some juveniles. Özabacı (2011) explained that aggressive adolescent behavior occurs because of emotional, behavioral, academic, and social issues. Darensbourg, Perez, and Blake (2010) indicated that African-American males are overrepresented in the process of suspension or expulsion. Most of the students were already failing academically because of poor attendance that resulted from exclusion from their regular classroom environment. Lee and Burkam (2003) suggested that the school system automatically blames students for academic problems; thereby, absolving itself from responsibility for connecting or facilitating the components needed for the students' education. Numerous studies consider how race and socioeconomic status play a role in how students differ in their academic ability and motivation (Weiher & Tedin, 2000).

### **Alternative School Cause and Effect**

The perception of the alternative school is determining by the success or failure of the students attending it. Most of the referred assignments to the school in this study were African American male students identified as either combative or disruptive in the public schools. For struggling African American male students, burdened by the expectation of likely failure and minimal success in learning, there is little or no motivation for school achievement. Many students who have experienced some sort of

violence demonstrate some aggressive and confrontational behavior. Garrison (2008) noted that socioeconomic status guides children's perceptions, transactions, and methods of communication. Some of the students face instability in their home or out-of-home placement resulting from neglect or abuse.

When negative influences occur repeatedly, students may make bad decisions or simply may disengage from the educational process. Merriam (2009) explained that school systems are structures within a given society and when conflict occurs, adjustments and adaptations are made as a way of regaining equilibrium. Morrison and Skiba (2001) posited that infractions such as disrespect, disobedience, and attendance problems that do not threaten school safety are illogical reasons for suspension. Morrison and Skiba suggested that effective instructional practices should focus on teaching social responsibility and appropriate behavior as a means of positive interaction for students.

Students assigned to alternative schools receive a public education, but they are isolated from their peers at their traditional school. Kozol (1991) believed entitlement to education does not necessarily translate into an optimal educational outcome. During adolescence, students may become involved in delinquency, using drugs, or developing poor relationships, any of which parents may be unable to handle. The image associated with alternative schools and the disproportionate assignment of African American male students to such schools resulting in suspensions means they become associated with a specific economic status to include gender or race. This suggests that school discipline policies are not the same for everyone. Students receive such assignment for a variety of reasons including administrative placement due to safety concerns. Some students face



overwhelming negative influences from their neighborhoods, but from a social perspective, education is considered an integral part of determining the future of an individual and its influence cannot be minimized (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

Perceptions within the communities influence the decisions of school board members and officials in determining what is in the school's best interest. A study that recognized inconsistent discipline by the school system towards African-American male students showed disproportionality is not due entirely to economic disadvantages nor is there any data supporting assumptions about where the students exhibit higher rates of disruptions (Skiba et al., 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). The African-American male students assigned to the alternative school are up to three grade levels behind academically. A student assigned or transferred among schools as many as three times in one school year, may cause difficulties. When there is a failure to address physical, emotional, or social needs, the consequence may be more than behavioral issues.

### **Repercussion of Alternative School Issues**

A study by Carpenter-Abey and Abey (2001) found that unmet physical, emotional, and social needs contributed to what is perceived as inappropriate behaviors. Some students require social services such as mental health services or out-of-home placement stemming from court involvement. The Civil Rights Project (1999) information suggested that school administrators rely on literal interpretations of zero tolerance policies and overzealously promote safety issues, using suspension to combat disruption in the educational environment. What is considered acceptable behavior based on

interpretations of policies and procedures, and on having law enforcement personnel in middle-grade and high schools.

Struggling students who have low expectations lack motivation for work. Gurantz and London (2010) believed that alternative schools were for students with suspension, expulsion, or juvenile probation issues. The interventions used that resulted in successful outcomes can vary depending on the specific goals of the students and program effectiveness.

Advocates against suspension felt that effective alternatives, including cooperation and self-management that supports positive behaviors rather than the consistent use of punishment, are preferable to exclusion from the education process.

Possible alternatives follow:

1. Most school districts in the state assign suspended students to alternative schools for the entire school year. Uniquely, the school studied assign students for either a remainder of the year contract, or for a temporarily modified contract as outlined in the policies and procedures manual of the school district.
2. Additional resources are required for the alternative high school curriculum, as course selections are limited.

Vocational courses such as brick masonry, carpentry, auto mechanics, and plumbing should be included. Other options might include a foreign language such as Spanish I. Such courses could provide credits toward graduation (Note that these courses are not presently offered).

## **Education Resources**

Educational resources for students cover many forms of interactive materials and devices, such as internet access, amplified tablets, computers, books, magazines, newspapers, and a variety of school supplies such as pencils, writing paper, and crayons. In 2013, the United States Department of Education started the Connect Ed. Initiative (Office of Educational Technology, 2014) which provides high-speed broadband service to mobile devices and digital resources in the classroom. These resources are available for students, parents, and teachers to include on school WebPages or for daily or weekly telephone communication about or promotion of school or district events. Chen (2016) reported that teachers have access to thousands of online lesson plans to help teach students.

## **African American Culture**

African American culture reflects a history that spans of slavery to modern times. It is a culture built on individual accomplishment against a backdrop of turbulent historical hardship. Differences in cultural background are present and a crucial factor in the education system. Historically, because of social and economic adversity, Black males have faced educational difficulties. Scholars and researcher understand that environmental and cultural factors influence human behavior including academic performance (Noguera, 2008). Integrating one's culture into the educational process is necessary. Rosman, Rubel, and Weisgrau (2009) declared that culture existed outside the individual but exercises a coercive influence over behavior.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1993) agreed that culture had an inescapable influence upon human behavior and that most learning may be constrained by it. If environmental factors and human behavior are products of beliefs, values, norms, and socialization, then drug abuse, crime, and dropping out of school must similarly be products of social inequality. The most effective way to reduce negative behavior is to reduce inequality in society (Noguera, 2008).

### **African-American Males**

Noguera (2008) posited that awareness of race and the significance of racial differences occur in early childhood. Majors, Gillborn, and Sewell (2001) explained that African-American male students exhibit nonverbal behaviors, communicating with expressive demeanors as a way of showing pride. These examples encourage simple explanations for the anti-social behavior of specific males.

African Americans are more likely to experience hardship, described as harsher living conditions, than most of their White counterparts (Future of Children Organization, 2008). An example is instability of living arrangements. A student's home placement may change frequently, from group homes, moving from one rental property to another, from low-income housing to foster care; approximately 65% of Black students change schools seven or more times from elementary through high school in the United States. Other examples include a substantial proportion of single-parent mothers and residences in unsafe neighborhoods.

Approximately forty-five percent of African American children live in poverty, compared to sixteen percent of their White counterparts (Morehouse Male Initiative,

2012). Tatum (2006) noted that African American male students are not performing well academically and are disassociating themselves from school. Although child poverty levels vary according to geographic area, most of the assigned male students in the alternative school are from low socio-economic neighborhoods, and struggle with academic and behavioral problems. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (2017) Accountability Services Division, believes one of the most common reason students may not attend school is that there were not enough available alternative schools or programs.

### **Assigning Students to Alternative Schools**

Alternative schools in North Carolina are both public and privately funded and offer services for middle and high school students (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2001). When a high school student is assign to the school for the current school year, the opportunity for promotion or graduation may increase because the student becomes eligible to qualify for the state of North Carolina required twenty-two credits instead of the school district requirement of twenty-eight. The twenty-two-credit rule for alternative schools and middle colleges helps a student graduate with their peers and slows the rising the dropout rate.

Most vocational or college-ready classes not offered at the school in this study due to size and funding.) The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practices, suspension programs are supposed to assist students to gain more control over their behavior, but concern about academic improvement is questionable. Differences in this school district include that it recognizes the UNC System college/diploma track and that

it offers a unique placement for students.

The school in this study desired to enhance assigned students' capabilities by focusing on educational achievement within smaller structured classes. The school's approach founded on consistency and redirection of inappropriate behavior for assigned students from grades six to twelve. Some of North Carolina's other alternative programs provide a therapeutic model on the same campus, but this one did not. Instead, the therapeutic component is separate and off-campus. The school applied a performance-based curriculum in compliance with North Carolina's alternative learning program standards and procedures (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017). Some unengaged students would rather have refused to allow the program to work for them and showed up only because of court orders. School success is prejudged on attendance, behavior, and the successful completion of the curriculum.

This school's program was design to provide most students with the opportunity of returning to their home school or graduating after the completion of the assignment. The alternative school is intending as an option for students and parents as a viable way of decreasing the dropout rate. Part of the strategy is to use a performance-based curriculum with weekly incentives and a documented point system. The program includes written or telephone communication with parents.

Some students might have had to drop a class they had been taking in their home school unless the home school was willing to provide assignments. In most cases, if direct class participation at the home school was required, then the course would be replace and the student could still get a credit. Students are allowed on the school campus

in accord with the contractual agreements signed by parents and students during the orientation process.

Based on statistical data, the school district in this study was among the top ten districts to close the achievement gap (The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). According to North Carolina's alternative learning program standards and procedures (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017), this course of study provided students with the opportunity to meet requirements and transition back to the regular school. There are several programs, which provide therapeutic environments for students with either physical or behavioral issues.

### **Student Performance**

School districts apply discipline and suspensions differently and inconsistently (The Civil Rights Project, 2000). Educators recognize that rewards and punishments are not always effective and can be counterproductive in terms of achieving academic excellence (DeKeyrel, Dernovish, Epperly, & McKay, 2000). In Abraham Maslow's *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), motivation is "not synonymous with behavior theory. Motivations are only one class of determinants of behavior; behavior is almost always motivated situationally, culturally and biologically" (p. 371). Conditions within the student's neighborhood can be interpreted as antisocial, a condition over which the student has no control. School districts' have adopted the policy that if a student convicted of a felony, the local school can deny entry. If such a student is to obtain an education, the school board may allow him or her to attend the alternative school until the charge is determined. The right of the community, students, and employees to a safe

environment is what school officials base their decision on. Lehr and Lange (2003) explained that local, state, and federal laws governing the increasing number of alternative school's influence accountability concerns.

Whether school policies affect the academic progress of students struggling with issues such as limited English, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage has not been determined. Traditionally, alternative schools receive a student population who may not be able to control their behaviors, attitudes, and actions (Turpin & Hinton, 2000). Hootstein (1996) believed that suspended students were not motivated to learn in classrooms, were inattentive, and unable to make the connection between learning and their outside lives. The behavioral issues of students might also stem from unaddressed physical, emotional, or social problems. A national survey estimates that in 2000–2001, there were approximately eleven thousand public alternative schools (Kleiner, Porch, & Farris-Westat, 2002).

### **Summary**

In Section 1, I introduced the local problem in this qualitative case study, which included the disproportionate assignment to alternative schools of African American male students with a history of suspensions. The study is significant to the community and to the history of alternative placement because of the problem of academic failure and behavior problems. The goal of the study was to include sensitivity toward the perception of an excluded student, who might face instability, neglect, or abuse at home.

What would happen if additional funding, such as Title 1 grants and donations for resources, given to the program? Many proponents of alternative schools believe that



funding is the most critical issue facing administrators, that current levels are not sufficient to provide quality facilities or instructional resources (North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center, 2002).

## Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the academic achievement problems among African American male students. Also, what essential practices teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline, and achievement. In addition, what are parent's primary concerns about student's assignment to the alternative school.

### **Research Design and Approach**

#### **Qualitative Design**

Qualitative research is associated with methods borrowed from sociology and other disciplines (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p.179). Qualitative research is about understanding and the perspectives of individuals (Hatch, 2002). Van Maanen (1983) explained that it is a term used to describe, decode, translate, and come to terms with the meaning of natural phenomenon. Merriam (1998, p.6) suggested that basic interpretive, phenomenology, case study, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical, grounded theory and postmodern-post structural research falls under an umbrella concept of qualitative. Creswell (2014, p.4) indicated that qualitative research is exploring and seeking meaning to a problem. Creswell noted that there are several different qualitative approaches including: (a) ethnography, (b) narrative research, (c) phenomenology, (d) grounded theory, and (e) case study. These approaches are discussed in the next paragraph.

## **Qualitative Approaches**

In the ethnography approach, the researcher studies shared patterns of behavior among cultural groups in a natural setting. I did not use this approach as I felt the alternative school environment did not meet the criteria of a natural setting. Grounded theory requires that the researcher attempt to derive a general abstract theory based on use of a specific process. This often involves multiple stages of data collection, which was not appropriate for this study. Phenomenology research identifies the essence of human experience concerning a phenomenon described by the participant. This study was about the human experiences of the parents and teachers and not the direct experiences of the students. In a narrative approach inquiry, a researcher studies the lives of individuals who provide stories about their lives. The approach was inappropriate because the participants' stories would not change the decision of the hearing officer and the assignment to the alternative school (Creswell, 2014). It seems the case study method was the most appropriate for this study.

## **Case Study Approach**

The case study approach is used in a variety of fields. Cases are restricted by individuals, duration, and process according to (Stake, 1995). A case study is a detailed chronological description through which data is collected using interview, observations, documentation, and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 2009). An empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context assists in understanding the experiences expressed by parents and teachers (Yin, 2012, p.117). Yin suggested that the use of triangulation (data) helps avoid potential problems of credibility and

trustworthiness. Merriam (2009) pointed out that a research study focuses on process, meaning, and understanding, with a richly descriptive final product.

## **Participants**

### **Population**

The population consisted of the parents and teachers in the United States. The target population consisted of thirty former and current teachers assigned to teach and supervise the students and approximately forty parents whose children attended the school during the school year.

### **Sample**

A sample of fifteen parents contacted directly or by phone and letters to determine whether they would participate in the interviews. Another representative sample of thirteen former and current teachers contacted, directly or by phone and letters to determine whether they would also participate in the interviews.

### **Sample Method**

Purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to select participants for this study. Creswell (2009) explained that a purposeful sampling selection is a key part of qualitative studies. The participants selected for interviews met the criteria because of the commonality of being parents of African American male students and assigned to this alternative school. The convenient sampling method selected due to the accessibility to the participants.

### **Data Collection**

Creswell (2009) indicated that data collection is a process of connecting activities

to provide information to answer research questions. This is one of the many steps involved in an investigator's inquiry. For this project study, I used in-depth structured interviews and document reviews. The method of collecting qualitative data involves an interview process and direct interaction with the participants, either in a group setting or individually. By asking related questions of all participants to elicit views and opinions, there were also selected questions specifically for the parents and for the teachers. The interviews were conducted individually. I felt that using focus groups could compromise confidentiality for the parent and teacher participants.

### **Interviews**

All three of the research questions were addressed by interviews. Kvale (1996) explained that interviews describe the central theme by explaining the meaning. Boodhoo and Pumessar (2009) suggested telling a story of the participant's experience. The interview process described to the participants, who were advised of the reasons why the study was important. The process included interviewing approximately twenty parents of assigned students and fifteen current and former teachers. I used the General Interview Guide approach proposed by Valenzuela and Shrivastava (2016), which meant each group of participants were ask the same questions. The individual interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes. Each participant was provided with a letter that explained the reason for the research. The interviews were conducted in the school's conference room. I contacted both groups with open-ended questions to facilitate the interviews. The interview questions are in the Teachers Interview Protocol (Appendix C) and Parent Interview Protocol (Appendix D). Participation Agreement Forms were sent to

all the participants and signed consent forms were obtained with the understanding that they could end their participation at any time. All interview responses were analyzed and compared for commonality.

### **Document Reviews**

All three research questions were addressed from the document reviews. The review of documents provided better understanding of the parents' concerns for student academic and behavioral situation by reviewing records such as previous and present grades, discipline reports, any specific documents such as an IEP. This also provided the themes and a more meaningful understanding. Approximately twenty student records were selected and reviewed. Permission to review these records was given by both the principal and the parents of each student. All were informed that the records were being reviewed for research and clarity. Each record reviewed showed issues of positive and negative behavior; in some cases, there were established patterns of misbehavior or low academic performance.

I reviewed the student's academic grades and scores in specific courses from previous and current years. Other important information reviewed included psychological or social history, discipline referrals, hearing officer decision and assignment(s), examinations and tests results. The documents reviewed in the student records section, were located at the alternative school, and were reviewed on site. Another reason for the review of these documents by the researcher were to provide insight into the responses given by the parents or the teachers during the interviews. This also provided the researcher with insight into the demands placed on teachers, and a sense of what was

specific to an alternative school environment.

Case study analysis consists of making a detailed description of a case or setting and presenting a chronology of events based on analysis of multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2009). Stake (1995) offered that there are generally four forms of analysis along with a description that is a detailed view of the case. The four forms are: (a) direct interpretation which a single instance and draws meaning from it; (b) categorical aggregation defined as a collection of issues which provide relevant meanings; (c) establishing patterns, defined as searching for relationships between two or more categories; and (d) naturalistic generalizations, defined as analyzing data to form generalizations that can be learned from (p. 74).

I started with the analysis by reviewing assigned students' records, grades, and test scores with permission of the parents and principal. I examined the incidents or violation of school policy that had caused the suspension and assignment to the alternative school. I attempted to check whether these constituted patterns of disciplinary or behavior issues or whether it was an isolated event. The findings are then presented descriptively along with generalizations that could be drawn. The analysis concluded with descriptions of emerging themes. All interviews were transcribed. Hatch (2002) felt that transcribing was a time-consuming process but that reviewing the interviews several times would result in better understanding of the information in the transcription. I ensured that the transcriptions were complete. The data from the interviews were organized into themes or patterns that emerged from the transcripts.

### **Data Analysis Results**

This section provides the analysis of the interviews with the parents and teachers along with their attitudes and perceptions and an additional analysis of the research questions. The themes that emerged derived from parents and teachers' perceptions about whether the program was beneficial for African-American male students and other students. These attitudes and perceptions based on the routine procedures and practices of the alternative school may be influenced by student social and emotional behaviors and academic outcomes. Creswell (2010) suggested that recording enhanced the accuracy of the data collection process. The interviews were responsive as the researcher followed guidelines using open-ended questions and narratives that were recorded (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The researcher also kept notes during the interviews and reviewed the information to reflect emerging themes and to assist in determining whether the school is beneficial. The data collection process in this study summarizes information from interviews and school reports collected by the researcher regarding the perceptions of the parents and teachers. Creswell (2010) noted that data analysis is an eclectic process of making sense of broad information, and that it can take many forms. Strauss and Corbin (2008) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) indicated that the researcher needs to read through the data to gain perspective on the overall picture, and that codes should be assigned to all data collected. Notes provided insight and a means of organizing the main ideas into themes or categories. In coding, the researcher identified themes of the literature.



Thematic analysis was conducted to determine the different themes that emerged from the study. Accordingly, the responses aligned with the research questions.

### **Research Question 1**

What are the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the academic achievement problems among African-American males?

**Theme 1: Parents' Perceptions.** As presented in Table 1, several open codes led to the development of Theme 1: unfamiliar terms, enrollment process, small environment, and rules and procedures. One participant stated:

Originally, my son was at a high school and I can tell you that there are some areas at that school that need improvement and that I don't think is being addressed why my son had to be assigned here to get assistance.

Others highlighted that the small environment and rules and procedures of the alternative school help their children to change their behavior. Another stated: "These students in smaller environments have better behavior and they have the opportunity to address what is bothering them, because of the smaller environment and [they] have that one-on-one person." Another said: "The rules and procedures were explained during enrollment. I tried to teach that to my children."

Most of the parents agreed that their perceptions regarding African-American male students' achievement were concerning, especially when the gap between Black and White students was so far apart. One of the parent's participating was quoted as saying:

"The academic program at this alternative school was not what I expected. As for me to address the African-American males students' concerns and the alternative

school's response to the achievement gap is like other educational resources, it's up to the individual student to want to achieve. Now I can speak about the school process and what the teachers here try to accomplish with the assigned kids."

**Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions.** The following open codes led to the development of Theme 2: too militant, achievement gap, no uniforms, aggressive.

Teachers and parents had reservations about inconsistencies of achievement, which the students are considered too aggressive or militant, and some feel that African American males have not received a fair chance. The parents also question the requirement of making students wear uniforms. One parent stated that:

"Well, I do know that there are some inconsistencies in teaching the kids; like certain kids are only provided certain classes, as well other kids can take higher level courses in the regular high school and they seem to stay in those classes. They don't have a diverse population as they do at the schools. They all kind of seem the same."

Another participant stated that "I was always concerned that my child will never be given a fair chance especially as he got behind." While another stated, "Well, my son comes from a school where they don't have to wear uniforms. So, there was a problem with that because I get paid on the 15th of the month and now I have to figure out a way to give him the uniforms to wear at this alternative school."

**Key Findings for Research Question One.** What are the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the academic achievement problems among African American male students? The key findings were that some parents indicated that assignment to the

alternative school was questionable, they seem to be concerned about the achievement gap between White and Black students, while others felt that the small school environment could help the students' behavior. The key findings among teachers were that teachers acknowledged that there are some inconsistencies in the achievement of Black students because they are not given the same opportunities as far as classes or high-level courses, and some students are just too aggressive with the administrators.

### **Research Question 2**

What essential practices do teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline, and achievement?

**Theme 3: Essential Practices Perceived by The Parents to Have the Greatest Impact.** The participants felt that most of the teachers at the alternative school will listen and are willing to help the students. Other participants believed that the staff involvement helps establish relationships, unlike what they experience in the larger school environments. They believed the small environment helps a student to focus and he or she is not as distracted. Some of the participants speak highly of the structure and practices of the school. During the enrollment process, the students receive a tour of the facility and an expectation of what he or she would be experiencing throughout the school day. Any questions asked by the parent(s) or student are answered and a contractual agreement is signed and completed outlining the expectations of the school, parent and students.

**Key Findings for Research Question Two (A. essential practices do the teachers and parents feel have the greatest impact?).** The key findings include smaller class sizes, relationship building between students and staff, the expectations of students, parents and

the school is establish. A tour of the facility removes the student's apprehension.

Exploring a plan of action to assist the student in the learning process is an essential piece of eliminating the need for discipline and in developing an understanding concerning student behavior.

**Theme 4: Essential Practices Teachers Perceive to Have the Greatest Impact.**

One participant stated that "I think it is important to see where the child was academically before the assignment to the alternative school and what can we do to measure growth. So, we make sure that they succeed when their assignment is concluded." Another felt that "To my knowledge, I think our academic instruction is better."

Another stated "We want to keep the relationship building going. We can make a difference and make it an easier transition from their traditional school to this program." Teachers from the alternative school are as concerned about academics as those in the traditional schools, as stated by one participant "The students are moving at a slower pace than regular school and going over academic material that they may have had previously in their home school. The students are still required to meet the same expectations for teachers are the concern as traditional school teachers."

**Key Findings for Research Question Two (B).** What essential practices do teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline, and achievement? The key findings were that parents felt that the school is changing the behavior, this was a good school and it was the best option for their child. Also, teachers explained that the students are given all the information upon enrollment about

consequences and the relationship is better in this environment than in traditional schools. In addition, teachers believed that the assessments given assist in determining where the student is academically.

### **Research Question 3**

What are parents' primary concern(s) about being assign to the alternative school?

#### **Theme 5: What Do the Parents Perceive to Be Their Primary Concerns?**

All the parents had positive feelings concerning the practices and policies of the alternative school. One parent stated that "I think this is a great school, I truly wished my nephew could stay at the alternative school just to graduate. I think he has learned so much and he has been great since his assignment; he took an end-of-grade testing and scored like three points from the highest grade and that was awesome. So, I think this school is great. I recommend this school to anybody who needs it." Another went further and stated "There are some good teachers there. Yes, this school provides caring and understanding teachers that my son liked and talked about, but the other school he attended didn't care about his welfare. He kept saying things like, he can get more individualized help. This is what he needed to help with his education and I think that's a good thing."

When it comes to this program as a parent, the concern is the child's behavior and the possibility of getting put out of school for the year. After enrollment and assignment, the parent felt this was a good program, as stated by one participant. "It really makes me sad that a child could be suspended from the traditional school, sent to this program and it

becomes the best thing for them. Coming from a mother of three children and adding a nephew, now four young boys is a very hard. This school has made it better for me and to hear my husband say my son is now a totally different person. He is not in this alone and he's even bragging about his teacher. He stays in uniform and ensures he doesn't break the rules. It just makes me feel so good that this school is supplying everything he needs to function as a young adult in this world."

Students had different (negative and positive) opinions about the District Hearing Officer's decisions concerning assigning them to the alternative school. The majority had positive opinions. Making the decision to complete the assignment was overwhelming to them, but once made there was less stress for the family and soon they realized the experience was rewarding.

One student, according to the parent stated, "I appreciated that I was given another chance because here they cared not only about education but explaining the outcomes of behavior." Another student felt that "I can truly say this school has saved me and helped my family. I am thankful that they were there because they have influenced me, and I really appreciate this school." While another stated, "The experiences have been wonderful. The staff is awesome. The extra help that student received. And it's just been a wonderful learning experience."

One student, according to the parents indicted that "I don't particularly care for this alternative school, for example, I was taking pre-calculus before a suspension. Now I can't take pre-calculus because your school does not offer that course. I don't think that's fair. According to the parent, this student's goal is to graduate and attend college.

**Theme 6: Students' Assignment to The Alternative School.**

Assignment of students to the alternative school depends on whether they have behavioral issues of noncompliant behavior, are involved in illegal activity, and can transform themselves into respectable and productive individuals and become responsible young adults.

One participant stated that “If they are doing any illegal activity in a traditional school they should be assigned to an alternative school,” while another stated, “And many issues such as noncompliance and unruly behavior should expect a child to come to the alternative school. It has to be issues that the situation produces a hostile environment for the learning process.”

Another stated, “I think students should be assigned to an alternative school because of behavior issues, events such as fights or problems with bullying other students.”

Teachers think that students should also be able to transform themselves, as stated by one participant. “I think that a student should be able to transform himself before and during the assignment to the alternative school. The students have the ability to transform themselves, continue their education while attending the alternative school, and do better in the future.”

**Theme 7: Perceptions of The Alternative School.**

Teachers assigned to the alternative school perceive that they improve their interaction skills. Students are assisted in following directions, make better decisions; students take corrective action in terms of their behavior and social lives. One participant

stated, "Perceptions of the alternative school with students making better decisions and giving back to the community is a major accomplishment. That was my perception when I was introduced to the alternative school." Another stated, "My perception of the school was that it is needed and necessary." Another stated "I think this alternative school is needed to help the kids with role models and hopefully help them get ready for reentry back to the traditional school."

Teachers also improve their skills when dealing with the children as stated by one participant "It gives the teachers opportunity to improve their skills as well" while another stated that "My perceptions of this alternative school was a prison-like environment until I saw the way they treat the students with firm guidance and respect."

#### **Theme 8: Contributions to The Alternative School and Appreciation Of Parents.**

The contributions of the teachers in the alternative school include encouraging parental involvement, helping kids realize their potential, encouraging parental care and appreciation, and efforts to ensure superior performance.

One participant stated, "My contributions as a teacher of the alternative school are trying to make the kids realize that they are important individuals, that they just got themselves into a situation based on circumstances, but they can make a positive change and turn the negative into a positive. And do I feel appreciated by both the students and parents." While another stated "My contribution is to help all the students I can. We have some behavior issues but nothing that we can't handle, and I do feel appreciated by the students and parents." Another stated, "It would be nice to have a hundred percent participation of parental involvement. It's always better to get as much help as possible. If



the parents would get involved or come inside they would make the alternative school a better and fair school. So, therefore, we encourage parent involvement and we want parents to be more engaged in their children.” Another said, “Well, my contribution—I feel would be happy to see them get the needed access to programs that they need to help their kids out. I feel that they do appreciate the program because they usually come in to tell you that they appreciate the way that you have looked into the situation when they called or have their child respond to you.”

### **Theme 9: Contributing Behaviors That Led to Student Assignment to Alternative School.**

One participant stated, “I think that traditional schools spend so much time focused on meeting expectations that they don't see the initial stages of the social behaviors are associated economic conditions, culture environments that kids come from. They spend so much time reacting to things going on with children that may go neglected in the home, which leads to the behaviors. I think the alternative school staff knows about the situations these children are in and the teachers want the student’s attention.

Another stated “Most of the time I feel that the behavior that allows students to come here is the behavior of not being able to think through a situation to make a better choice. A lot of the students react according to the way they feel about a given situation.”

### **Theme 10: Available Resources at The Alternative School.**

One participant stated, “When students come into the alternative school a lot of them find out that we have uniforms and are unable to afford them. The school can provide uniforms on a need basis.” Another stated “I felt like everyone wanted to help the

children. So, it was okay, I am teaching math and I feel like I'm taking care of children in my own family.”

The intervention program is efficient and effective, said one and “We have outside resources who come in to help. So, we do have programs in place that are willing to help us with problematic situations.” while another said, “Here we have a lot of different programs to help kids with anger management, they speak to the kids if needed, and there are staff who help with students.”

Social workers and counselors play a key role in helping students change their behavior. One participant stated, “We have a counselor and a behavioral specialist,” while another said, “I think the resources are always available. I think they have an excellent counselor and there are good teachers.”

**Key Findings for Research Question Three.** What are parents’ primary concern(s) about being assign to the alternative school? The findings for the parents were that they perceived the school to be a good school where the students are learning so much and that they had positive feelings about the practices and policies of the school. Also, they felt there were good teachers that were caring and understanding. The findings from the students were both negative and positive according to the parents. The positive comments were that while the assignment to the school was overwhelming they later felt the experience was rewarding. The negative comments where they felt being assigned to the alternative school was not fair and they didn’t care for the school.

### **Limitations**

In qualitative research, the analysis and discussion emphasize the importance and

convey the steps taken in the study to check for accuracy and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Creswell noted that based on the consistency of the patterns of themes, reliability plays a minor role.

There are two limitations regarding this study. First, the analysis and results from the thirty-five interviews conducted with the participants represent only a small percentage of the former and current parents and teachers associated with this alternative school. The responses to the questions may or may not reflect the views of most parents, teachers, or other staff members. Second, time was a limitation due to unscheduled circumstances such as illness and appointments.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

This professional development is a proposed workshop involving sensitivity training that addresses school policies, procedures and the results of the strict enforcement by educators, as discussion topics. The purpose of the three-day workshop focuses on hidden biases associated with educators and the benefits of addressing the needs of the students with various stakeholders (target audience) such as parents, teachers, community support personnel, and administrators. The goal is to provide an open dialogue with team building activities that enhance communication between all parties from a problem-solving perspective when dealing with the challenges of the cultural differences, exclusion of students from their peers and limited course selection.

The workshop will include a brief introduction of the presenters' conducting the sessions. This includes visual aids materials such as PowerPoint presentations on a variety of topics. This also includes handouts describing the specific topics for discussion during each session, daily schedules for each day's events specifying each hour of the training, with protocols for participation in each workshop, a pamphlet is provided, and at the end of each session an evaluation questionnaire to share opinions and improve upon the workshop. A mass email will be send to all participants with a follow up to suggestions.

### **A Proposed Three-Day Workshop**

The professional development plan for a workshop will align with the project in that it will also focused on some of the negative perceptions of African American male

students, among which are the believes that they are militant, aggressive, liable to deviant behavior, and academically behind their peers. Based on the data analysis, most parents are unfamiliar with the school terms, and accept the disciplinary decisions and assignment to the alternative school without an appeal process. These views will be addressed through the scheduled discussions and lectures. The workshop is intended to provide a meaningful impact on the school district (Bissell, 2012).

The type of workshop was chosen as a preferred means of informing, developing and evaluating the strategies utilized to deal with such issues as the achievement gap, the disproportionate suspension of African American male students, and the lack of advanced placement classes. Ross (2012) explained that written policies promote less equity for African Americans.

### **Review of the Literature**

The project is a proposed three-day workshop, used a modified version of the developmental research utilization model which was designed, based on the research of Brown and Rodger (1999). The model describes the exchange of variables between systems and people. In designing this modified version, I applied three variables: (a) the school system, with the policies and procedures it has in place as the basic system; (b) the educators, as enforcers of those policies and procedures, which may include hidden biases; and (c) the parents, who supported and advocated for the students, and community agencies that supported the school and its communities.

Google Scholar contained resources for this literature review, and the ERIC database provided access to older information. Both databases were accessed through the

Walden University portal. Searches for professional development resulted in the use of teaching skills needed to convey the intended messages to educators and the different professionals attending. During the workshop presentation, the methods used, and the results provide a description of the effects of exclusion on students who removal from schools which should have more resources to handle emotional, social, and academic concerns. Quattlebaum (2015) stated that professional development should include knowledge of subject, researched basic information where learning about diverse needs can occur.

The variables described in the workshop reinforce the appropriateness of addressing the recurring theme of exclusion and will discuss suspension assignments to alternative programs and dropping out of school as related issues. Ross (2012) felt that school laws and policies promote equity, but the fact is that equitable educational experiences are not available for everyone. Training for implementing the workshop will focus on the need for sensitivity from the audience for African American male students for whom there are disparities in rates of suspensions, an achievement gap, and a lack of opportunity because of such things as limited course selections. The intention is to develop specific interventions and strategies to assist increasing educational achievement.

### **Addressing the Problem**

Social interaction and problem-solving perspectives will be key in presenting the workshop. The stages of social interaction will include awareness, exploring a concept, taking what is relevant, deciding what is reliable, and deciding to accept or deny aspects of the concept. This type of workshop should assume that the different variables

discussed will determine or affect the outcome (Farmer & Chapman, 2016). The assumption here was that at-risk adolescents' environment increases the risk of arrest, drugs, and poverty (Benner, Beaudoin, Chen, Davis, & Ralston, 2010). The workshop will also incorporate professional development as a tool; enabling the stakeholders to develop core perspectives by gaining skills and knowledge (Bizzell, 2011).

The workshop will be held in the school's City Room. As a licensed counselor specializing in adolescent behavior, I will serve as the workshop facilitator. A portion of the opening introduction will deal with the school district's strategic plan for 2016, including changing the zero-tolerance policy to the restorative school discipline practice (Meyer & Evans, 2012), a process developed by the Advancement Project of the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers. The school district is presently implementing this model to support Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (The Schott Foundation, 2016).

### **Benefit of Workshop**

The workshop will be beneficial for teachers and educators in helping them to be effective in their interactions. The Professional Development Training Curriculum and Materials is used as the guide for one of four selections for the project study. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) activities will be used to assist in changes of practices in the classroom (Farmer, Reinke, Brooks, & Reinke, 2014). I will strive to articulate and examine the different layers used in disciplining students, and the resulting perceptions of suspension and reassignment. During the school year, the school district will provide educators with the opportunity to participate in professional development workshops and

seminars. The workshop will describe the purpose, date, length, location, and time of the events for all participants, educators and individuals from the communities interested in attending. This professional development directly impacts teachers' practices (Dwyer & Jackson, 2007).

The professional development workshop will include events covering topics concerning exclusion, harsher discipline practices, cultural understanding, race and economic status, the dropout rate, character education, the disparity in suspensions and assignments to alternative programs, and the perception of the students. The workshop is designed so that the stakeholders could develop knowledge and professional skills. It also will include team building and other discipline topics for discussion, providing governing guidelines for the workshop that held all constituents accountable. The workshop discussions are intended to be informative and have a direct meaning.

### **Barriers to Overcome**

Students will come from both urban and rural areas. Many live in low-income communities. These factors and a variety of school policies affect African Americans. The National Center for Educational Statistics for 2012 projected a decrease in African-Americans graduating from high school. More recent data suggests the decline would continue through at least 2012-18 (Aud & Hussar, 2012). The workshop will demonstrate that most parents feel that their children are supposed to benefit from their experiences instead of being excluded from school altogether. Follins (2004) explained that students come to school with different motives. Some students attend either because of the parents or ordered by courts. Others are homeless and have nowhere else to go.



Follins (2004) felt that barriers such as lack of childcare, drug abuse, mental or physical illnesses, and a criminal record, could discourage individuals from being confident about their ability. In the United States, approximately sixteen to twenty-seven percent of youth arrested by or before eighteen years of age (Farmer et al., 2014). Swilley (2011) suggested that the disparity between European American students and African American students for graduation is twenty-three percent. Students may be facing overwhelming negative influences from their neighborhoods or have undetected disabilities. From a social perspective, education should be considered an integral part of determining the future of communities; its influence should not be minimized.

In the workshop, possibilities will be discussed for students who exhibit different emotional and learning disabilities and those who frequently changed their residence. Smith and Sobel (2010) recognized that over the past thirty years, suspensions, discipline referral, and expulsion were disproportionately applied to African American male students. Singh (2015) suggested that one way to attack the system is to do it as an outsider of the system, with diplomacy and communication. The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students (1998) supported a variety of developmental programs designed to improve the education of students identified as at-risk because of race, poverty, geographic location, or economic disadvantage. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1993) pointed out that improved school-community relations and collaboration between agencies could produce needed resources. These communities and neighborhoods play an important role in shaping an individual's outcomes, and if the

neighborhood is located in a poverty-related environment, the risk factor is greater for those students.

During the workshop, conversation of positive conditions may have influenced children toward educational success. Jenkins (2013) indicated that perceptions play a primary role in academic outcomes and building strong relations. Risk factors such as inadequate care and domestic or social violence increase the risk for negative outcomes and poor assimilation into society. The literature review and the workshop activities both suggest that student learning can be enhanced through teacher-positive interactions.

### **Important Factors**

The workshop will include discussion of such factors such as the student's ethnicity, family economic status, and family structure, as well as behavior and absenteeism. Title I status is considered for and conferred on schools in which approximately forty percent of students receive free or reduced lunches. Family instability is associated with low academic expectations. This workshop will not focus on blame; rather, it will provide an understanding of student experience. Weiher and Tedin (2002) revealed that many literacy examinations have indicated race and ethnicity as a predictor of socioeconomic status and of how students differ in their academic ability and motivation. A study by Advocates for Children and Youth (2017) recognized the disproportionate and inconsistent use of discipline toward some students.

The workshop will focus on the need for sensitivity toward cultural awareness. DeCarlo (2016), Skiba et al. (2002), Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine (2009), and Ferguson (2014) suggested that African-American and special education students

were overrepresented in referrals to disciplinary alternative programs in comparison to their percentage of the overall school population. The workshop will be a platform for discussion by professionals such as advocates, educators, and law enforcement officials, as well as for parents associated with the education process and the community. They will all have a common interest in dealing with education through safety, by seeking ways to change inappropriate behavior.

The workshop also will offer professional development in a comfortable setting, complete with booklets and sufficient time for self-reflection. Organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center also supported professional development as a means of teaching tolerance and reflective practices, which are important for personal development and improvement of the classroom environment. Most of the issues associated with students that educators and other professionals need to consider included an understanding of the types of environment to which students are exposed.

Do we as educators assist in providing such support as clothing and food for those who are in need? Professional development can provide an opportunity for a partnership with community-based agencies depending on the circumstances of the student, whose needs are based on such circumstances as being in a low-income family, having a learning disability, or speaking limited English (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Different agents such as school social workers, teachers, counselors, police officers, community advocates, and administrators can employ any number of interventions to support the emotional, social, and academic needs of these students.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) seeks accountability for students' learning while trying to meet the needs of diverse learners by teaching all students and seeking equity. Ellis et al. (2013), suggested that the tactics displayed by some educators and police, such as using physical restraint, provide an opportunity for immediate suspension. These areas of concern were examined prior to developing the project to include the materials used in the workshop.

The benefits of using the workshop include improving understanding with the participants. Boyd, Gast, Hunt, Mitchell, & Wilson (2010) explained that changes occur at such a pace that educators should seek professional development just to keep up with updates. The workshop will bring out the perceptions of parents and teachers help describe student behaviors that had result in suspension. The project redefined some of the obstacles that have interfered with academic progress. The professional development should include peer-teaching, use of technology, follow-up to learning, using a systematic approach to learning, and discussions concerning the topic. Goldenson (2011) suggested that without a blueprint of how to implement a program, communication is required. According to multi-tiered systems of support (Riverside County Office of Education, 2014), the effects of suspension can be described by the relationship between academic and behavior outcomes. This project also focuses on intensive emotional and behavioral issues with students and seeks wraparound measures of support.

Another factor to consider was how suspension might affect a student's progress and commitment (Hemphill et al., 2012). The Behavioral Intervention Guide proposes a positive approach of offering choices to students, using prompts, keeping proximity

control, and avoiding triggers such as lengthy delays, getting into power struggles, and reprimands. Once students become disengaged with school, truancy becomes an issue. This may play a role in creating an atmosphere of student mistrust because of the negative environment. Kleiner et al. (2002) indicated that administrators have expressed concern about the lack of parental involvement when discussing truancy and the lack of consequences. Some administrators feel that it is the court's responsibility to hold the parents accountable. Another factor that can lead to suspension is bullying by students. Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) explained that this could involve law enforcement and result in poor social adjustment and low academic performance.

The relationship between students and teachers can be influential in the decision making of students who are at risk of dropping out (Hodgman, 2016). Suspending a student in need may not be the only solution and placing a child onto the streets is not an answer (Ryan & Zoldy, 2011). Bear (2012) offered that advocates of alternative measures fail to recognize why suspensions are needed in education to serve as a deterrent. Advocates who address students' mental health issues in schools may affect behavior. Advocates complain that students are children, who deserve repeated chances after mistakes. Unfortunately, in the education system sometimes unconscious bias by adults may lead to confrontations (Sexton, 2015). Brown and Beckett (2007) described an example of reflection as a principal regretted suspending a former male student because she felt her decision had set the student on a path toward failure and a life in prison. She asked, is this her contribution to society?

### **The Workshop in the Future**

The workshop will be important because it will provide insight into alienation and the negativity associated with the consequences of failure offered an opportunity for reflection. Alienation and negativity can lead to a student dropping out of school. Some of the barriers to the workshop could be a lack of participation or interest. The diversity office for the school district and the director will review the details and correspond with local and national speakers from around the country. This project is considered for addition to the district counseling retreat for the 2017–2018 school year. The workshop, including the various presenters and their topics of discussion, is supported by the diversity district’s office. The workshop will provide a professional development option for educators; address the need for additional resources, such as mental health professionals; and examine realistic options for students not seeking college. In accord with DeGarmo (2012), the resources, roles, and responsibilities of participants, as well as the implementation plans for a three-day workshop are identified in the following sections.

### **Project Description**

Students in the district can choose from among an increasing number of programs. This study distinguishes, between what students are free to choose and what students have no choice about the assignment to the alternative school. A proposed project, a three-day workshop, will be presented, involving stakeholders from all professions that promote social adjustment for teachers and parents. It is designed to

provide an informative method of communication between professionals to better address the academic, social, and emotional needs of these students.

The difference in the overall study describes those mostly affected by exclusion and reassignment; the workshop would provide an advocate's voice to describe what suspension and exclusion does to students. The implementation and development of the proposed workshop would foster better relationship-building between parents, teachers, and students. Materials for the workshop will include a pamphlet setting out its goals, explaining the need for the session, a daily schedule of topics, events, and speakers. The sessions will include a PowerPoint presentation and exit evaluations. The intention of the project is to develop a district-wide approach to the growing problem of suspensions. Such an approach could develop information to counter stereotypical assumptions and provide insights that could benefit and reinforce a sizable portion of the student population.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The three-day workshop concluded with an evaluation completed by the participants during the final day as part of the final session. Formal feedback is requested on the evaluation form (A-2). The collected forms are analyzed for improvements to future workshops. Changes will be made based upon suggestions in the evaluations (DeGarmo, 2012). Angelo and Cross (1993) mentioned that providing feedback evaluations is an ongoing assessment that will improve the learning and teaching process. The proposed workshop will be implemented throughout the school district. The evaluation instrument, such as a survey, that will improve professional development

delivery will be included (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Kolek (2015) considered non-responses from surveys to be a growing concern, but the results should not be considered biased. The type of survey method used by the researcher was a cross-sectional questionnaire because of the limited time allowed at the end of the event. The participants responded to closed-ended questions, without the opportunity for follow-up probing. The goal of the surveys is to better enhance the delivery of the information and presenters. This is to benefit and provide updated evidence as to the impact of what continues to be the major concern in education. Educators, parents, and social theorists are aware of the success and consequences associated with education and the impact on our children's future.

### **Materials and Resources**

The participants were the audience, a vital part of the workshop design. The audience included educators, social workers, law enforcement personnel, clergy, concerned citizens, and community advocates such as group home providers and parents. The room provided for this workshop is the school's auditorium, where district workshops have been held previously. The auditorium can accommodate small groups for breakout sessions. Technology equipment is also available such as a computer, a projector, and a screen used for power point presentations. There will be printed materials, markers, pencils, tape, and assorted construction paper.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Participants**

The strategies and information provided to the participants were designed to produce responses reflecting a negative or positive understanding of presentations on the



issues facing these students. For the workshop to be successful, it is necessary for the stakeholders to consider and reflect. It was the responsibility of the participants to develop meaningful dialogue by examining the information provided during the workshop. It was the responsibility of each participant to promote and demonstrate qualities of fairness and consistency in their interactions.

### **Project Implications**

The benefits associated with this project included emphasizing collaboration from the three days of events, interacting with the speakers. The PowerPoint presentations contributed another element to constructive communication. The intention was to reach out to all stakeholders and other professionals to achieve a deeper understanding that did not condone unruly behavior but sought to find common preventative interventions. Promotion was undertaken through the distribution of fliers, posting the events on websites throughout the school district and community, and utilizing bulletin boards.

The researcher used the survey from this event as one source of data to consider the need for additional workshops and whether giving more notice to other public officials would reach a wider audience. The workshop provided an open dialogue with all local stakeholders to brainstorm ideas and determine what is needed to bring in additional resources to assist students.

The topics for discussion provided information as to the status of students who have made bad decisions. In 2012--2013, the school district's disciplinary measures affected more than three thousand and thirteen students, most of who were in the ninth grade. The most affected ethnicity was African American. On January 8, 2014, former

President Obama's administration stressed the importance of educators rethinking zero tolerance policies according to the Dallas News. Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, stated that nationwide, approximately ninety-five percent of school suspensions were for nonviolent misbehavior, i.e., for being disruptive, acting disrespectfully, being tardy, using profanity, violating dress codes. Instead of determining what is best for students, educators should consider a more meaningful discussion as to what students require to obtain a useful education.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

The workshop on equity and equality was inexpensive and cost-effective and even included travel expenses for attending outer-county professional seminars. The workshop was based on discipline factors that contribute to suspension and the struggles children face daily in and outside their schools. The limitations associated with the workshop and guide included the fact that the project study only examined thirty-five participants who represented a small percentage of the population and experiences associated with the alternative school. The issues discussed reflected some of the negative academic, criminal, and social consequences for students. The project was useful as a guide for sensitivity and can be revised as needed.

Dastidar and Sikdar (2015) stated such projects must be flexible in their development and that workshops on discipline should distinguish the cultural bias and gender of both educators and students. Biases may have resulted in a student being recommended for suspension, which can result in ten days absence from school, and the possibility of reassignment to the alternative school, which can take fifteen to twenty days.

Students will continue to make mistakes and to learn from them, as will adults. The lack of communication, staff shortages resulting from budget cuts, limited supplies and resources, the need for greater accountability are all concerns that can lead to stress and low tolerance levels between educators and students. Initially, parents and students together attend an enrollment process with the school's counselor or other staff members.

An informative enrollment procedure includes reviewing a pamphlet and clarifying the expectations students have of the program. Students are unaware that during this assignment to the alternative school, they are only authorized to be on this school's campus. They are not allowed on any other school campuses or properties without permission and if they are found there, they are charged with trespassing. Ferguson (2014) considered expectations and differential treatment by teachers to have a considerable impact academically on African American male students. Some of the limitations of the project study included the absence of follow-up data on students returning to their traditional school, inability to determine whether disciplinary review to minimize the educational loss, and inability to answer the question of why disproportionality occurs and to determine if there were patterns.

This study sought to advance the understanding and sensitivity of the effects on students' suspensions and assignment to an alternative school. Subsequent data showed that some students who were unsuccessful in their traditional schools were more successful at the alternative school. The program has a remedial focus based on the assumption that the students need remediation in academic and social skills; it prioritizes equity over equality. These remediation efforts may be limited due to the inadequate resources available for students from the local community without court-imposed actions.

The goal was to address students' behaviors through interventions by providing support and then transition the student back into the educational mainstream (Raywid, 1994). This program establishes a place of learning where disengaged students may feel comfortable in obtaining instruction. Several board members have questions concerning

the disparity in suspensions and seek to examine racial equity in disciplinary actions. Creation of an evening component for area students to enhance the resources of the alternative program with an after-school program could serve all students. This could benefit those nontraditional students who may need only a few credits toward graduation through the remedial based program called Apex. The limitations of the workshop included how effective the materials presented. Will it change the perceptions and attitudes of the audience or participants participating in this workshop?

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

According to the Indiana resource network (Indiana Department of Education, 2016), to succeed, the educational environment must be reinforced with supportive, balanced, and consistent messages. Differentiated instruction is needed for teaching students' diverse learning styles and promoting pro-social positive behavior models. Prioritizing family engagement and communication is critical for success.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

The benefit of the study was to guide discussion to address issues affecting the community such as student and school safety. It also provided an opportunity for experienced professionals from diverse disciplines to join in a conversation on how to assist those in need. To solicit mentorship, job shadowing opportunities and apprenticeships for age-appropriate students are helpful. This would also assist in establishing partnerships with local businesses and ultimately benefit the community economically and socially. This is an opportunity to reconsider strict enforcement of short- or long-term suspension and even exclusion as responses to students' school

violations. The school discipline policies have an adverse effect on achievement for this specific segment of our population.

A review of the perceptions of an alternative school and of procedures was a challenging undertaking because some parents have a negative view of the school. Some of the concerns involved low socio economic status students making bad decisions, the disproportionality of suspensions and ensuing exclusion based on perceptions of a specific population. This assignment may be beneficial to most assigned students although some may require a smaller or more restrictive setting to be successful. If the school is considered the cornerstone of the community, is it appropriate to turn away any member?

An approach inspired by critical thinking may produce the need to change the beliefs of others as well as their discipline practices. I used a combination of written expressions from the past and present concerning equity and equality by describing the effects associated with suspension. This highlights the obvious by focusing on African-American male students specifically and other students in general. African-American male students have been disproportionately affected by suspension and culturally insensitive discipline. In this workshop there will be sensitivity and understanding approaches applied which attempted to question and challenge current practices. The goal is to change the traditional clichés and understand the experiences (Shor, Roelfs, & Yogev, 2013).

Some changes made by school boards may be the result of negative outcomes or they may seek additional solutions to the growing concerns of educating students in a

safe and orderly manner. This project study encompasses an evaluation that occurs once the workshop concluded and will help determine from feedback if other educators will have a similar viewpoint.

This study may be useful for guiding the behaviors and perceptions of educators and parents who are interested in guiding students by developing strategies, goals, and resources that specifically addresses at risk students regarding the type of assistance needed. In addition, this study is meaningful because of the lack of information available regarding the perceptions of parents and teachers as to the needs of these types of program. Future studies will determine whether the alternative school can continue to inspire as well as improve instructional practices for students. This school attempts to apply researched based interventions and strategies to meet the vast array of issues associated with the social relationships and academic needs of today's students. To achieve this, it is imperative that students receive equal and fair treatment.

Finally, this study contributes to the body of research, which influences opinions, perspectives, and perceptions of parents during and after their child's assignment to the alternative school. Most student assignments are due to behavioral issues, and more than eighty percent of assigned students are males. Research has shown that these excluded students may have difficulties making the adjustments needed to be successful citizens in our society. Students' negative behavior is sometimes a direct result of suppressed emotions that go unaddressed or unchecked, but the school system too often takes a punitive approach to dealing with these issues (Swanson, 2004). Swilley (2011) stated that success can be influenced by positive teacher-student relationship.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

As the researcher, I conducted this study in my role as a school counselor and therefore had to be extremely careful not to allow preconceived ideas to affect interpretation of the data collected. As a scholar, I felt the need to analyze decisions, and question opinions by showing passion for what I considered relevant and important. I was amazed at the amount of time invested in reviewing, changing and articulating what I perceived as a critical issue and point of concern. As the developer of the study, I experienced a level of concern and a very deep regard for the academically and socially challenged African American males who often viewed as confrontational underachievers. When you get to know a student and their family's struggles, you seek sensitivity and understanding.

The fear of rejection, retention, and exclusion from school provides an opportunity for exposure to elements of antisocial behavior within these low-income communities. As I thought about the project and the workshop, I felt that I gave voice to a few young men and their families. I considered the design and decided on using a workshop for equity and tolerance when confronted with the effects of discipline in schools.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

This alternative school provides basic classes for students to graduate high school but fails to provide upper-level classes for college preparedness. Other alternative programs provide addiction therapy, programs for pregnant teens, and residential treatment for some students. Positive outcomes for students include meaningful



experiences directed toward the focus of graduating high school, college or the work force. The potential impact for positive change from the organizational perspective is the alternative school can and must continue to provide a positive supporting role for students and families feeling alienated. Continued research on alternative programs and the relationships with students and parents is highly recommended. Because of a continuous influx of information on student behavior, educators will be challenge from different cultural perspectives.

Public school districts provide alternative schools as the only public option for parents to consider during the process of hearing, assignment, and enrollment. The potential impact of establishing positive relationships in this program can also provide rewarding opportunities for the school community with such activities as a student improvement award with possible scholarships and internships. The daily communication between students and teachers can facilitate working relationships toward achievement while changing negative images associated within the school.

One future consideration should be consideration of a therapist added to the program to assist with the emotional issues confronting the students. Having a therapist may help resolve social conflicts and prevent major disruptions during school hours or scheduled events.

### **Conclusion**

The study is intending to promote social change within this community by improving communication through understanding and sensitivity. The workshop will assist in improving the lives of parents and students, realizing that mistakes made by

children as well as adults. The study combined with the workshop and pamphlet explains the difference between equality and equity based on what parents and teachers said. It is how we respond—adjusting or adapting our thinking and our behavior—that will benefit the community. This study viewed the effects of attending an alternative school and the disproportionate suspensions of selected students, whether they are successful or not. This is a testament to how we as educators use school discipline and how it affects academic achievement. The workshop will enhance and equip all participants with a better understanding of what they are dealing with when confronted with a highly emotional student.

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## Appendix A: The Project

### The workshop social Contract

- Participate
- Listen with Respect
- Struggle together
- Reflect and review (if that was your child)

### Adding to the Purpose of Workshop

- Why are the Middle Colleges, which were designed to help the underachiever and low socio-economic students now recruiting the best students from the traditional high schools?
- Why does a student who pushes or hit an adult during a fight get charged for assaulting an adult, when the adult steps between to combating students?
- How does violating a school rule concerning cell phones leads to out of school suspension?

## Meritocracy

- Is it more difficult to teach a student coming from low socio economic neighborhoods than more affluent communities?
- Barriers are obstacles that may discourage individuals from being confident in their ability, which include issues such as child-care, drug abuse, mental or physical illnesses and criminal issues.(Follins, 2004).
- Students faced with overwhelming negative influences from outside of the home, within their neighborhoods.
- All educators, parents and social theorists are aware of the consequences associated with academic failure of students and this issue has a negative effect on the local, state and national levels with rising crime rates, delinquency and unemployment.

## Defining Suspension

- According to statistics during the 2014-15 school year the district reported over 1482 suspensions of African American males with a district population of approximately 73,000 students.
- 721 suspensions were African American females
- 421 suspensions were white males
- 117 suspensions were white females
  
- This number reflects the possibility of disproportionate number of suspensions toward a specific race.

## Forms of Social Power and Privilege

- The difference in cultural backgrounds is present and an important factor in the education system especially with the communication dilemma facing students.
- A large number of literary examinations have indicated race and ethnicity as a good predictor of socioeconomic status and how students can differ in their academic ability and motivation.
- It is important to discuss factors such as the student's ethnicity, family economic status and family structure, as well as discipline and absenteeism. The economic status of the school is based on current and past percentages of the number of students eligible to receive free or reduced lunch.

## Discussion

- The study suggests that conditions can influence children's motivation toward education. The influence which demographic risk factors have on children is destructive. Risk factors such as poverty, inadequate care, domestic or social violence can also increase poor assimilation into society.
- Educators must understand that most assigned students may come from poor families and have self-esteem issues stemming from low academic performance and possible grade retention.
- Current student enrollments would indicate that group homes and single parent families comprise most of the students being served.



## What questions we should be asking?

- Why are the majority of suspensions African Americans?
- Why are the majority students suspended out of school or long term are African American Males?
- Is the school system modeling society and their same treatment of African American adult males?
- Does this school to prison pipeline exist?
- Has anyone considered that different groups experience society's rules differently and as a consequence , view society itself differently. (Plihcik, 2013)

## What does it mean to provide a fair education?

- This process is limited by the freedom that parents and educators may feel in truly sharing their responses.
- The facts represent a racial disparity in our nation and district in unconscionable proportions.(Plihcik, 2013)
- According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2009-10), it was reported that only 52% of African American males graduated within four years.
- The finding could influence the consideration of consistent dialogue between all stakeholders including students.

## 10 Points of Research

- Perceptions of African American male students
- School authority and confrontational students
- Disparity in suspensions
- Disparity in assignment to the alternative school
- Percentage of dropouts caused by suspensions and academic problems
- Race and economic status affecting achievement
- Harsher discipline practices
- Influence
- Exclusion
- Consequences associated with academic failure

## Perceptions

- Equity awareness: According to the National Center for Education Statistics, what is the percentage of U.S. Schools with no teachers of color on staff? [www.EdChange.Org](http://www.EdChange.Org)
- Answer: 40%
  
- What portion of the U. S. Government budget goes to welfare and Social Security?
- Answer: less than 1% to welfare and 20% to Social Security

### Did You Know:

- The School District's Alternative Programs for long term suspended/ assigned students have limited course selections.
- Higher level courses can not be taken by the assigned students without assistance from the home school.
- Students may lose credits if home school is not willing to provide assistance or if the student must be present to receive the instruction.
- Most students are academically behind from the suspension and including any additional absences.

### Creating an Action Plan

- By creating strategies or a action plan for each student will provide a visual road map to negotiate the educational arena.
- One of the strategies included motivating students by providing incentives if you reach a certain amount of points during the week. The incentive is a weekly event such as extra time playing games, participating in sporting activities and video games with refreshments.
- Extra assistance is provided if needed or requested by either the parent or student.

## Implications toward Positive Change

- The consequence associated with academic failure in high school:
- Rise in crime rates- if the student is not in school because of suspension or absenteeism, where is he or she? Possibly involved in an illegal activity.
- Unemployment and possibly untrained and uneducated, which impacts the economy and community.

## Parents/Students/ Options

- Several options are given to the parent to consider:
- High School Students- Dropout and attend (GTTC ) Community College for GED (General Education Diploma), home schooling, or Private School at the parents' expense.
- Middle School Students- Private School or homeschooling, Juvenile Detention Center

## Length of Assignment

- Most students will receive semester assignments, probationary returns to the homeschools, rest of the year assignment.
- Assignments back to the home school are conditional base on behavior of the student after completion of assignment to the alternative school.
- In developing the workshop we must consider the communities and neighborhoods play a critical role in achievement outcome for students (Schellenberg, 1998)

## Behaviors Associated with Alternative Schools

- Possible substance abuse (Drugs and alcohol)
- Violence within the home
- Court Involvement
- Destructive or defiant behavior (Acting out)
- Suspension
- Criminal activity
- Family turmoil
- Gang involvement

## References and Resources

- Doing our work/ series on Race, Racial Inequity, and our future in Greensboro, Every first Monday of Every Month, 7-8:30pm.  
[www.meetup.com/Guilford -Anti-Racism-Alliance](http://www.meetup.com/Guilford-Anti-Racism-Alliance)

## Professional Development Training

**EQUITY AND EQUALITY**

Come join us for Equity and Equality “Breakfast and Learn” with other Change Makers

**Participants should be?**

GCS Administrator, Executive Directors, Directors, Principals, Assistant Principals, induction Coaches, Academic Coaches, Finance Personnel, Student Services, Human Resource Personnel, Social Workers, Resource Officers, Community Leaders, Parents and Central Office Staff.

**Session Goals:**

Provide a common definition and understanding of issues of inequity in public systems and the need to be collaborative in our approaches to eliminating disproportionality and disparities.

Provide administrators with a deeper appreciation for the key role that disaggregated racial/cultural/ethnic data has in decision- making.

Provide administrators with an understanding of the history behind the national/state/local discipline policies that have led to the institutional/structural inequities that exist today.

The workshop will take place in the City Room @ 900 English Road, High Point, NC, 27262

For more information, please contact Mr. Larry Adams

Counseling Office at 336-442-1718

Modified and used Guilford County Schools Diversity

### **Equity and Equality Protocols**

The Equity and Equality workshop will bring together local community and state scholars whose work is grounded in an examination of race, equity and social justice issues in their various disciplines This is to challenge and expand our knowledge in the areas of race, class, culture, gender, language and ability.

These are the protocols we are hopeful will guide you to participate in this workshop:

Adopt one or all of the following postures: Be open and curious.

Be respectful of your co-participants and the curiosities of others.

Listen with deep introspection. It is an inevitable that we all enter collective spaces with our bias. It is hidden bias, residing in the unconscious.

Participate, ask questions and engage.

Make the connection between the topic and your professional practice in the field of education.

### Workshop Pamphlet

#### **Introduction**

The disproportionate numbers of African American male students suspended and assign to the alternative school due to truancy, dress code, non –compliance and other violations are continuing at an alarming rate. According to 2011-12 academic school year, a national analysis of data revealed that there were 44 % expulsions and 47% suspension s across 13 southern states in K-12 Public schools. The national statistics delineated 35%



suspensions and 34% expulsions according to a report released by the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. In North Carolina, the African American student population is approximately 26.7% of the total student population but comprise up to 50% of the number of suspensions. The rationale for these procedures is to prevent diminishing student academic achievement, limit exacerbated behavior problems and prevent school dropouts from occurring.

### **Workshop Goals**

By the end of the workshop, the participants will:

- Understand with sensitivity the effects of suspension
- Understand the challenges that excluded students face
- Develop and understand the cultural differences
- Obtain and gain knowledge of resources to assist both the educator and student

### **Workshop Schedule**

Please pick up materials upon arrival (Pamphlet)

8:00-8:15..... Arrival/Registration

Self-Image- What changes do I need to make? Power & Politics- What things need to change in the community? Strategies for Change- Can I become an agent for change?

8:30..... Breakfast

9:30..... Agenda/ Introduction

10:30-11:00.....Group Talk & Team Building

Activity (Bonding)

11:00-11:15.....

Break

11:15-12:15..... Consequences associated with Academic Failure

(Power Point Presentation)

12:15-1:45.....

Lunch

1:45-3:00..... Disparity in Suspensions

Video and Discussion

<http://myfox8.com/2015/08/26/black-students-suspended-at-higher-rates-than-others-in-ing-says/?share>

3:00-3:15.....Break

3:15-5:00..... Consequences associated with Academic Failure

Close Session

Tuesday 10-6-2015- Who am I? What am I made of? Can I trust you?

Strategies for Change- What can I do? How do I effect change?

8:30..... Breakfast

9:30.....Instruction

10:30-11:00..... Group Talk & Activity

11:00-

11:15.....Break

11:15-12:15.....Race and Economic Status

12:15-1:45.....

Lunch

1:45-3:00.....Perceptions of the Students

Video and Discussion

<http://wunc.org/post/black-students-disproportionately-suspended-north-carolina#stream/o>

3:00-

3:15.....Break

3:15-5:00..... Percentages of the Dropout

Rate

Close Session

Wednesday- 10-7-2015- Building Lasting Relationships

Power- What has changed in me? What do I stand for?

8:30..... Breakfast

9:30..... Instruction

10:30-11:00.....Group Talk & Activity

11:00-

11:15.....Break

11:15-12:15.....Disparity in Assignment to Alternative

School

12:15-1:45.....

Lunch

1:45-3:00..... Instructional

Practices

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/08/25/434650842/study-tracks-vast-racial-gap-in-school-discipline-in-13-southern-states#>

3:00-

3:15.....Break

3:15-

4:45.....Exclusion/Reflection

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/study-finds-higher-expulsion-rates-black-students-south/>

4:45-5:00.....Program Evaluation

Close of Session

### **Suspensions**

The use of strategies by school personnel and the discipline applied by school administrators in dealing with students can be looked at favorably or unfavorably. This particular process will assist in understanding the impact of the welfare and well-being of the student. According to General Statute 115-390.2, of the North Carolina Public Instruction (Board of Education), local school boards have the authority to adopt policies to govern the conduct of students and require adherence to that policy and this is what is

interpreted by administrators to suspend or discipline students.



### **History**

This history of suspension is grounded in discipline and punishment for the violation of policies, rules and procedures, and that the learner required knowledge of the cultural influences of the students and provide reflective thought from experience. The inequities in the school systems of the United States which students with higher percentages of poverty will more likely face larger class sizes, less funding, have higher student to teacher ratios, limited access to computers, experience serious teacher turnover ratios and receive more severe consequences regarding discipline (Mills and McGregor, 2013).

According to K12 Academics (2015), throughout the history of education the most common practice of discipline was corporal punishment; however, it became problematic and abusive which presented with growing opposition. The United States and Canada, both applied zero tolerance for infractions of existing laws and regulations. Students were punished regardless of how small the infraction. By 2004, many student

discipline cases considered harsh due to the restrictive policies implemented because of the shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.



### **Insight**

Understanding how cultural privilege and social power plays a key role in deciding and implementing discipline is paramount. Fisk and Ladd (2004) believed that educational equity was a threefold concept incorporating equal treatment, equal educational opportunity, and educational adequacy.



### **School Practices**

In 2013, over 70% of the students involved in school related arrests or referrals were either Hispanic or African-American. This pattern continues today. Monroe (2005)

felt that harsher discipline administered to African-American males despite the lack of conclusive evidence supporting educators' claims that these students displayed higher levels of disruptive behavior. Opponents believed that discipline does not address racial bias and cultural differences that teachers and administrators must reflect on. Holliday (2013) explained that implicit biases of teachers and administrators explained as confrontational events that cause the disproportionality of school discipline. Accordingly, biases are attitudes that affect understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner.



### **Viewpoint**

The Office of Civil Rights (2014) provided a snapshot of suspensions in education, black students comprised only 18% of the total enrollment but 48% suspended more than once. Similarly, the national average reports a 5% suspension rate for whites and 16% for black students respectively. Steinberg and McCray (2012) offered that we attempt to identify the factors that contribute to African American male students' decision to attend school or dropout by understanding their viewpoint.

Skiba (2002) indicated that the Federal Gun Free School Act (1994) highlighted the need for stricter and tougher punishment for minor offenses in school. Rant (2015)

believed that the interpretation of discipline is differently depending on the type of violation, the school's climate and the type of administrator. Skiba, Shure, Middelberg, and Baker (2011) confirmed that discipline practices did not improve the school climate by removing students and it did not improve instruction. In 2013, a Fawn Grove, Pa., 5<sup>th</sup> grade student suspended from school for pretending to use an imaginary bow and arrow and in 2012, Anne Arundel County, Md. student fashioned a Pop- Tart in the shape of a gun, suspended from school. Skiba (2002) alluded to supporting for suspensions believed that students have become more combative, confrontational, and disruptive. The Victoria State Government School Policy (2014) also believed that the all laws interpreted and applied. Faubert (2012) considered that failure to educate students negatively affected their chances of success in both their personal lives and professional lives.



### **Different Approaches**

The region of the country you reside in can determine what form of school discipline and climate your child may encounter. California, which is a more liberal state, applies a Restorative Practices of School Discipline (2008), which is an alternative to suspension. Another large school district (Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, 2015) in the



southeastern area is currently applying the Positive Behavior Intervention Support Model to achieve positive changes in student attitudes or academic behaviors. Even in the Buffalo Public Schools System (2013) which is in the northeastern part of the country, their school board changed their discipline policies where students can no longer be suspended for truancy, cheating, cutting classes, smoking, running in the halls, or violating the dress code. The Racial Justice Now Organization (2014) requested a moratorium on out of school suspensions in Dayton Public Schools due to 45 students per 100 students suspended. In the same year, the Portland Parent Union (2014) also called for a moratorium on the out of school suspensions to the Portland Public Schools.

Other school boards decided to implement the Restorative Justice Program (2008) which keeps the students in school but still holds them accountable for their behavior. The San Francisco Unified School District (2014) decided to ban suspensions for defiant behavior in favor of the Restorative practices. This program allows students to build relationships by bringing all parties together to address the violation instead of punishment; students must devise a plan to repair harm. Proponents for stronger discipline are seeking stricter reforms to prevent fighting in school by students, whether it involves kicking, pinching, tripping, slapping, punching, or hitting. Another example included a California school applied an accountability program for students with strict policies including detention for tardiness, which their administration considered too excessive (Shull Elementary School, 2015)



www.bigstock.com - 3917130

### **Importance of the work**

African-American male students are three times more likely to be suspended than their peers. Previous studies have shown that every single suspension may have increased a student's odds of dropping out, as stated by Rant (2015). In other states across this country, students have seriously injured others and committed suicide due to disciplinary violations. Some parents felt that the discipline policies were rigid, lengthy and hostile towards their children but the school board to prioritizes safety while striving to keep students in school by helping them learn from mistakes. The Office of Civil Rights (2015) revealed that some (charter) schools have the similar rules and enforce independent disciplinary standards and their suspension and expulsion rates are the same as the public schools' rates. This autonomy is a result of their freedom from state regulations.



### Zero Tolerance

The frequent use of discipline in school has its merits, according to the Disparate Impact Theory but the form of discipline that is racially neutral on the face applied, by teachers and administrators but has a discriminatory result when addressing students from other cultures (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). Educators must realize that the broad interpretations and perceptions of teachers, administrators, and other school officials have failed to address the disproportionality of African-American male students. Some students suspended and assigned to the alternative school for non-compliance and truancy, fighting, weapons, or drugs. Welch and Payne (2010) explained that restrictive practices implemented such as dress codes for students to promote conformity. Additionally, ID badges, security surveillance cameras, metal detectors, locked doors, resource officers with weapons, drug sniffing dogs and locker searches are also being utilized (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder 2009).

## Appendix B: Evaluation

**Date: Time of Day:**

**Questions: Comments:**

- 1) What was the starting and ending time?
- 2) Was the workshop accessible?
- 3) Do you feel the workshop met the objectives?
- 4) Did you follow an agenda?
- 5) Were the rules and agenda explained?
- 6) Was the conclusion of the workshop on time?
- 7) Were their knowledgeable presenters?
- 8) Did everyone participate in the discussion?
- 9) How could the workshop be improved?
- 10) Were there any parts which could be improved?



*GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS SCALE ACADEMIES*

*School Community Alternative Learning Environment*

Greensboro: Principal (P) XXX-XXXX (F) XXX-XXXX

High Point: Principal (P) XXX-XXXX (F) XXX-XXXX

Alternative Education Referral

(SCALE 1)

This form must be faxed to the *APPROPRIATE* SCALE Principal, Hearing Office, EC Department, and Regional Student Services Administrator on the day a student is recommended for long-term suspension.

- Principal SCALE School (XXX-XXXX)
- Principal SCALE Academy - Greensboro (XXX-XXXX)
- Hearing Officer (XXX-XXXX)
- Exceptional Children's Dept. (XXX-XXXX)
- Enrichment Region (XXX-XXXX)
- Southeastern Region (XXX-XXXX)
- Central Region (XXX-XXXX)
- Western Region (XXX-XXXX)
- Northern Region (XXX-XXXX)

Student Name: First Date Student Suspended: \_\_\_\_\_

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Is student in the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)?*      Yes      No

Full / Current Mailing Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

8

Code of Conduct rule(s) Violated: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Violation(s): (i.e. type of weapon) \_\_\_\_\_

Does this student receive free or reduced lunch?      Yes      No

Has this student been suspended previously this year? How many days? \_\_\_\_\_ How many incidents? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the student been identified as a student with a disability? Yes      No If yes, list \_\_\_\_\_

Has the Special Education Program Administrator been contacted to schedule a manifestation hearing? Yes       
No

This form is being submitted by:

(Name and Position Title)

School Name:

Date:

School Telephone Number:

## Appendix C: Teachers' Interview Protocol

**RQ 1: What are the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the alternative school's effectiveness in addressing the achievement gap of African American males?**

Interview Question 3. Describe your perceptions of this alternative school effectiveness when addressing the achievement gap of African American males?

Interview Question 4. Describe your contributions to the alternative school and do you feel appreciated by the parents when addressing the behavior, discipline and achievement?

**RQ 2: What essential practices do teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline and achievement?**

Interview Question 2. Why do you think the essential practices of rigor and expectations do you believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline and achievement?

Interview Question 6. What resources are immediately available at the alternative school that will assist students?

**RQ 3: What are parent's primary concern(s) about a student's assignment to the alternative school?**

Interview Question 1. Under what circumstances do you believe students should be assigned to this alternative school and should the parents be concern?

Interview Question 5. Describe in your own words what behaviors contributes to a student assignment to this school's setting?



Interview Question 7. Please explain why you feel parents should exhibit concern about the assignment to the alternative school?

## Appendix D: Parent Interview Protocol

**RQ 1: What are the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the alternative school's effectiveness in addressing the achievement gap of African American males?**

Interview Question 1. What were your primary concerns about a student's assignment to the alternative school?

Interview Question 2. Please describe and share your thoughts regarding the alternative school's effectiveness in addressing the achievement gap of African American males?

**RQ 2: What essential practices do teachers and parents believe will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline and achievement?**

Interview Question 3. Describe any reservations or favorable remarks you may have had concerning the instructional practices and school improvement plan at this specific alternative school?

Interview Question 4. Please describe what essential practices do you feel will have the greatest impact on behavior, discipline and achievement?

**RQ 3: What are parent's primary concern(s) about a student's assignment to the alternative school?**

Interview Question 5. Considering your options including the district's hearing officer's decision to assign your child to the alternative school, can you describe your experiences at this school whether favorable or unfavorable?

## Appendix E: Tables

Table 1

*Theme 1 Parents' Perceptions*

Open coding	Participants' words
Primary Concerns and Unfamiliar terms	<p>I don't remember having any real questions. I feel like they explained everything to me well.</p> <p>No, I understood everything. Everybody at school answered all my questions. They were very informative, and they made me feel good about the assignment. My nephew and I were very happy and pleased.</p> <p>Yes, they answered every question I had.</p> <p>No. Everything was explained. I was concerned that they wouldn't share where my son stood academically.</p> <p>The school plan was not provided to me about how they going to catch my son up academically. So, I can't really speak on it, but I felt the school system had to provide my son an education. I can tell you that there are some areas for improvement and that I don't think is being addressed.</p>
Enrollment process/academic achievement	<p>I felt good because they gave my child assessments. I mean, these kids are all pretty smart, and I wish other schools would have been doing that, especially when they were younger.</p> <p>Well, I just want to make sure that my son graduates from school because he headed to college</p>
Small environment	<p>The student is in a small environment and the behaviors or issues that they have are able to be addressed. I think my child is better because of the small environment and they provide a more one-on-one process and give them so much more attention.</p>
Rules and procedures	<p>The rules and procedures were explained during enrollment. I tried to teach that to my children.</p> <p>I thought the rules were simple and fair. I was concerned that all the children with issues in one school setting could be a setup for failure.</p> <p>I think that some of the rules and regulations might be a little bit too strict.</p>

Table 2

*Theme 2 Teachers' Perceptions*

Open coding	Participants' words
Too militant	<p>Right now, I have always felt that I thought African-American males exhibit a militant behavior during school and the way they talk to adults and parents. How are we as educators supposed to address these kids when they lack respect and still must meet the demands and challenges of testing.</p>
The achievement gap affecting black students	<p>Well, I do know that there are some inconsistencies in the achievement of the Black students; like certain kids are given certain classes, as well other kids can take higher level courses and they seem to keep their grades up with issues of behavior also. The Black students don't have the same opportunity and may not use the same language as White students but still understand and can explain with the same answers.</p>

---

Fair chance	I was always concerned that my child will never be given a fair chance especially as he falls further behind.
Provision of uniforms	Most of the comments given are my son comes from a school where they don't have to wear uniforms. So, this presents a problem because I'm on a fixed income and now I have to figure out a way to give him the uniforms to wear at this alternative school.
Aggressive	I just didn't like the way that some of the kids are very aggressive with the administrators and they are too fast to get the resource officers involved in an incident that can be handled outside the law.

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Table 3

*Parents' Feelings Concerning Specific Practices and Policies on Discipline, Behavior, and Achievement*

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<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Great	At this school, it's great to see my nephew's behavior change because he came from a lot of problems where there was physical abuse. The problems he was having were leading to violence and now he has become a very respectful young man.
Good teachers in school	There are some good teachers here in the alternative school. Yeah, he agrees that he had some good teachers. He stated that he liked and talked too, but other teachers from his old school he felt didn't have his best interest at heart. He is explaining that he's got one-on-one help, which he said he needed. I think that's a good thing.  The experiences have been wonderful. The staff is awesome. The extra help that kids get and how nice they are. And it's just been a wonderful learning experience.
Great school	I think this is a great school. I have said it's truly great and I wished my nephew could stay there to graduate because he has learned so much and he has done great things; he took EOG and I think for the language part he was like, three points from a five and that was awesome that at the [other] school he just -- they do not work and try to do any tests. So I think this school is great. I recommend it to anybody who needs it.
Good program	It really makes me sad that a child could be suspended from this program because it's the best thing with smaller classes and coming from a mother of three children and now raising a fourth young man is a very hard thing to do, but this school just helps to make it better. I want to see that my nephew and I want my son to come here. He's become a totally different person. He even [gives] homework back to the teacher. You know, he stays in uniform. He doesn't want to break any of the rules or be out of uniform. And it just makes me feel so good that he's in this school and that their procedures are supplying everything he needs to function as a young adult in this world.

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Ability to control behavior	You guys seem to be able to control these kid's behavior, you know, I am all right with that. I just feel like this program is the best and I just wish you guys were in the regular school.
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Table 4

*Teachers' Feelings Concerning Specific Practices and Policies on Discipline, Behavior, and Achievement*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Assess growth	I think the assessments given assist in determining where the student is academically. The growth in the student's ability should be compared to see where the child was before they left the traditional school. The different instruments to show growth are just a few things that we do some measures in the alternative school.
Going over expectations	To my knowledge, I feel that during the enrollment process the counselor described and in detail go over all the expectations and possible consequences for repeated violations and that the relationship with the students is better than traditional schools.
Easier transitions	I wish the transition and assignments to this alternative school process would go faster because the students fall further behind and don't get the chance to make up class work.
Academic leadership	I think that our students are receiving the best that we have to offer and that, you know, we should allow students an opportunity. It's not to get as academically excellent as they should be in any other environment. So, the academic leadership still will be in the alternative school.
Concerned teachers	Well, I'm concerned because the student may not have a lot of time to gain the instruction from the teachers. The interaction makes a positive impact on the students for academic purposes with limited time. The student must master the same amount of information and are held to the same expectations as in the traditional schools.

Table 5

*Students' and Parents' Feelings Concerning Students' Primary Concerns*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Overwhelming	Well, my child felt like he was tired of going back to a school and they seemed not to want him there. I was constantly going over to the other school to talk to his administrators or teachers about the same thing. It was a little overwhelming to go through the hearing and then the assignment, you know, it was his fault, so he had to do it. I don't think anybody would want to go through something like this with their kids.
Good experience	I can truly say this school has saved my family. I am thankful that the teachers were there for me. The teachers have done so much for me and helped me make progress in my relationship with my mom. I really appreciate this school and the experiences have been wonderful. The staff is awesome. The extra help that I and other kids received . . . it's just been a wonderful learning experience.

	My experience has been favorable, but I would have preferred to stay until the end of the year rather than having to go back to the traditional school.
Course not offered	Well, I didn't particularly care for this alternative school for example; I was taking pre-calculus before I got suspended. And now I can't take pre-calculus because your school does not offer it, I don't think that's fair. My goal is to graduate and attend college.
Students complete education	I appreciated that I had another chance because at this school, education is not an option and they have the skill for redirecting negative behavior.

Table 6

*Feelings Concerning Being Assigned to the Alternative School*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Illegal activity	If they are doing illegal activity in a traditional school, they should be assigned to an alternative school. It should be based on the individual child—what they have done to get here, is it an offense that warrants assignment to the alternative site?
Noncompliance	Any noncompliant behavior is not reason enough to uproot a student. The change in environment can hurt or benefit depending on the student. I would not want to send my child to an alternative school. It has to be an issue of whether this school could provide the student the same type of academic rigor.
Behavioral issues	I think a student should be assigned to an alternative school because of some behavior issues, certain events like a fight or to help the student focus because of fewer distractions or having a certain problem with other students. You know behavioral issues that routinely occur if the student in the general population.
Ability to transform themselves	I think that a student should be assign to this alternative school under the circumstances that they have the ability to transform themselves, continue their education, and be curious to do better in the future.

Table 7

*Perceptions of the Alternative School*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants words</b>
Better decisions	The alternative school means possibilities of seeking different choices, making better decisions by students, and trying to turn the student's lives m a positive direction. That was the perception/image when I was introduced to the alternative school.
Follow directions	My perception of this alternative school was the professionalism displayed by the staff, where the student had to follow directions and they would listen to the students' problems.
Correct behavioral issues	I think this alternative school from my perception of the personnel is the kids with behavior issues should benefit and take the opportunity to correct them by seeking help. This should help to get the students ready for returning to the traditional school.

Made adjustments to students' life	My perception of the school is that it is a necessary placement for at-risk students and that it has to be a flexible environment when dealing with a student's life.
Teachers improve skills	It also gives some new teachers the opportunity to improve their skills of dealing with problematic kids.

Table 8

*Contributions from the Alternative School*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Help kids realize their potential	<p>My contributions as a teacher to the alternative school is trying to make the kids realize that they are important individuals, that they just get themselves into a situation based on circumstances, but they can have a positive outcome to turning the situation around and go back a different person. And do I feel appreciated by the parents?</p> <p>My contribution as a teacher is to help wherever I am as a team player. We have some behavioral issues, nothing we can't handle, and I do feel appreciated by the students and parents.</p>
Encourage parent involvement	It would be better to have more parent involvement, but we do okay. Most of our parents try to be involved because they see the school as a fair opportunity and as a second chance. So, therefore, we encourage parents to participate and get involved. We want parents to be more engaged in their children.
Parental care and appreciation	With this school, I feel appreciated and that can't be described by others. Most parents do care about their kids. Well, I feel like we need more programs or access to resources to help their kids out. I feel that they do appreciate this school because they usually come in to tell you that they appreciate the way that you have handled their unfortunate situation. They express this whenever they call or have their child respond to you.
Good performance	Yes, absolutely. I did feel appreciated by both the students and parents. They thank you after viewing the progress made or that their children were finally getting good grades.

Table 9

*Contributing Behaviors That Led to Student Assignment*

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants coding</b>
Social behavior	<p>I think that traditional schools spend so much time focused on meeting expectations that they don't see the initial stages of social behaviors associated with economic conditions and the cultural environments that kids come from. They spend a lot of time reacting to things going on with children that may go neglected in the home that leads to the behavior. I think the alternative school staff knows the situation these students are in and the teachers want to have the children's' attention. The course work may cause some of the behavioral issues in the classroom. And sometimes teachers can contribute to that by pushing students to show results. Also, think that they maybe make more progress than expected.</p>

Types of behavior	The diverse types of behaviors which we must address— not listening or not following directions, saying horrible words, picking on each other—are a few of the main concerns.
Inability to make decisions	Most of the time, I feel that behaviors are what cause students to be assigned to the alternative school. [Students with an] inability to make good decisions in certain situations are given the chance to learn to make better choices. A lot of the students react according to the way that they feel about a given situation.

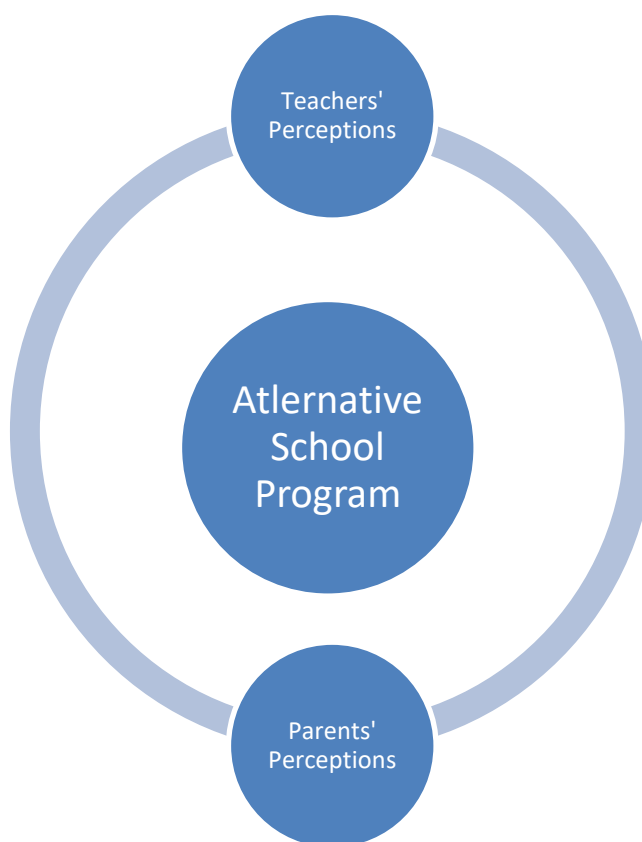
Table 10

*Available Resources at the Alternative School*

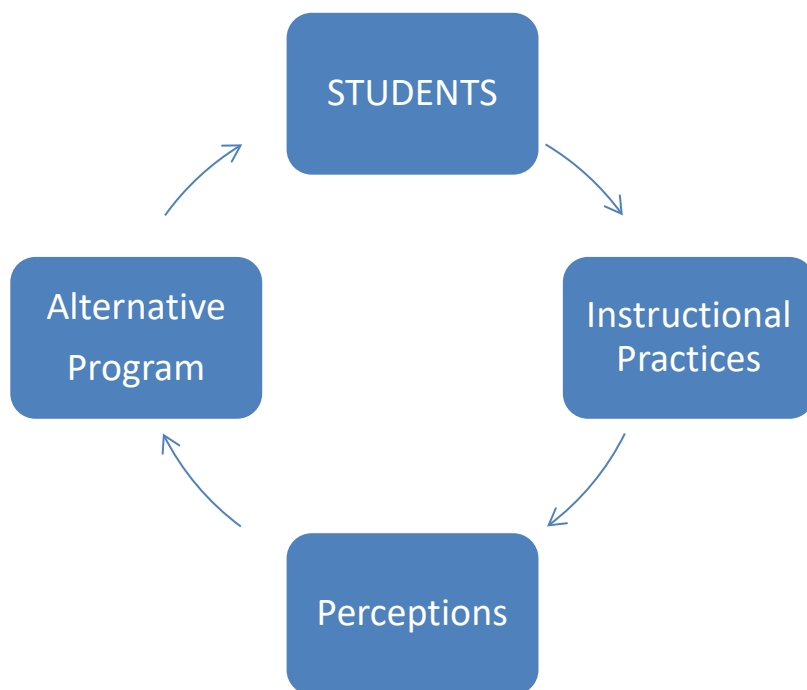
<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Participants' words</b>
Uniforms	When students come into the alternative school a lot of them find out that they have to wear a uniform. The school can provide uniforms on a need basis.
Good teachers	I felt like everyone wanted to help the children. So, it was okay, I am teaching math and I feel like I'm taking care of children in my own family.
Social worker/counselor	We have a social worker and a counselor. We have a counselor and a behavioral specialist I think the resources are always available. I think they have an excellent counselor and there are good teachers. We have a good staff that is always there for the student's whether in the home or in school, and we have a social worker who really works for kids to give them help with personal needs.
Intervention programs	We have outside resources who come in to help. So, we do have programs in place that are willing to help us with problematic situations. Here we have a lot of different programs to help kids receive anger management. They speak to the kids if needed and staff that helps with students.



## Appendix F: Figures



*Figure 1.* Methodological Triangulation Modified (Yin, 2011).



*Figure 2. Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence.*

Connection through student assignment to the alternative school: Student's archival records/ grades of past academic performance. Also with parents of African American male students' perceptions and the instructional practices of this program based on structured escorts, grades, point sheets to show behavior, students who completed the program.