An Investigation of the Impact of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions on the Number of Disciplinary Actions Take in a Diverse Urban Middle School, and on the Overrepresentation of African American Males Facing Those Actions

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

San Diego State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Educational Leadership

May 5, 2014
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

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May 5, 2014
Approval Date
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ABSTRACT

The overuse of punitive consequences in response to aberrant student behavior has become a focus of attention for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Its use appears to be having a detrimental impact on students and their futures. The present study examined practices designed to reduce the number and nature of these punitive approaches used in high-poverty urban middle schools. Furthermore, the literature confirms that African American males receive a disproportionately high percentage of punitive disciplinary practices and that the impact on these students and their future is a concern for schools and society.

The present study was conducted at a school in which the number and percentage of disciplinary actions were higher than for similar schools in the district and in which those actions applied to African American males were also disproportionately high. Guided by the literature, the nuances of the first 36 months of a school-wide implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) were investigated. The impact of implementation was measured using qualitative interviews, observations, the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), the Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Survey, and Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs). The results indicated that school-wide PBIS was implemented with some notable success.

School-wide PBIS implementation was measured by the SET at 80% after the first 36 months. Teachers and other staffers increased their level of priority for implementing PBIS with fidelity in their school. There was a decrease in both monthly and annual discipline referrals to the office (the latter dropping from 1,360 to 695) over a 36-month period of time, and the number of disciplinary referrals applied to African American
males also decreased (dropping from 444 to 256) during that same period. However, African American males continued to receive a disproportionately high share of those reduced actions. They represented 18% of the student population but received 36% of the disciplinary actions. These findings seem to indicate that the implementation of school-wide PBIS may be an important process. However, as the model continues to be implemented, better and more proactive support for African American males is needed.
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Throughout the dissertation journey, I was fortunate to have family and special friends to assist me along this learning process. Their unwavering support encouraged me to continue as I transitioned into a different stage in my professional career and learning while pursuing this doctoral degree.

I would like to thank each one of my colleagues in my cohort—you all hold a special place in my heart. I also want to thank each of my professors. After every session of every class, I walked away with more knowledge than I walked in with, and every day I felt just a little bit smarter.

I especially want to thank my dissertation panel. I have the most profound respect for Dr. Ian Pumpian, Dr. Douglas Fisher, and Dr. Kelly Johnson. I put you three through the ringer, and you all came out unscathed. I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart.
I dedicate this dissertation work to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my mother, Mildred Dodson, and to my sisters, Donna Snell and Annette Dodson. I also dedicate this work to my brother, Charles Dodson. To my father Chesterfield and my sister Rosemary—I know you two were the guiding angels that gave me the stamina and strength to keep moving forward. I wish you two could have been here for the completion of this work; however, I do feel your presence as you smiled down on me throughout the entire Doctoral program.

A very special dedication to my daughter, Camry—your unconditional love was a great source of inspiration for me. I love you, Camry, and always will.

Last, but certainly not least, I dedicate this work to Jennifer Coronel. The love, support, and sacrifice that you gave to me leaves me more than a little humble. You stayed by my side and continued to encourage me to keep moving forward, even when there were times when I felt like giving up. Jennifer, I will always love you with all my heart.

You truly are the heart of my heart, the apple of my eyes, and above all, the love of my life. If there is such a thing as soul-mates, you will always be mine.

I give a heartfelt thanks to all of you.
CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Background for the Study

Increasing numbers of educational policy makers, researchers, and practitioners are questioning the overuse, and efficacy, of punitive disciplinary actions (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). The lack of effectiveness in using those practices to reduce aberrant behavior (Skiba & Rausch, 2006), coupled with the negative impact those practices have had on the educational and post school outcomes of youth (Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Wald & Losen, 2003) is cause to further question those practices and explore alternatives. This study is designed for that purpose and to specifically consider the impact that those practices have on African American males in light of their discouraging educational and post school outcomes. Disproportionately high numbers of African American males linked directly to unemployment, crime, and prison. While representing only 6% of the general population in the United States, African American men represent 49% of prison inmates. Only 4% of African American males attend college, but 23% of college-age men in that population group are incarcerated or on probation.

It appears that race and gender are predictors of unemployment, crime, and prison. African American males are a case in point. When compared to other races, they are represented disproportionately (with either high or low numbers) in terms of suspension rates, expulsion rates, percentage of students placed in special education, and percentage of students in advanced placement classes. Life outcomes are influenced in part by school experiences. Research underscores the importance of regular school attendance, access to high-quality instruction, and opportunities to learn rigorous course content.
Many factors have been identified that could possibly account for rates of disciplinary disparity, including race, ethnicity, and poverty. Unfortunately, in America race and socioeconomic status continue to be highly correlated (Skiba et al., 2011). The high correlations of people of color and low socioeconomic status are of concern (Skiba et al., 2011). The relationship between low socioeconomic status and high dropout rates and poor adult outcomes is also well documented (Donovan & Cross, 2002). There also appears to be a correlation between race and disciplinary actions taken in school (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987).

The disproportionately high number of harsher disciplinary actions taken with African American students is also an issue that warrants attention (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). The disproportionate actions exist even independent of socioeconomic status despite studies that indicate no differences in the behavior of African American and White male students (Skiba et al., 2002). The more severe actions, such as being sent to the office, suspension, and expulsion, result in lost instructional time, which correlates directly to poor academic performance, school failure, and dropout rate (Skiba et al., 2002). Stated another way, researchers have reported that African American male students receive harsher levels of punishment for less serious behavior than their White counterparts. Studies have also indicated that African American students are referred to the office more often for offenses that involve a higher degree of subjectivity, such as disrespect and defiance (Skiba et al., 2002).

African American males seem to be facing two huge barriers to their success. First, they are more likely to endure challenges associated with living below the poverty line, and second, they are more likely to receive disciplinary actions that remove them
from classroom instruction. Clearly, race and gender are related to a loss of instruction, underachievement, and failure. One of the primary purposes of public schools is to prepare students to successfully transition into adulthood as productive and constructive members of their families and communities. The dropout rate for African American males nationwide is 53%. African American males who do not have a high school diploma and are 16 to 30 years old are extremely likely to spend at least some part of their adulthood in prison. In 1979, there were only 100,000 African American males in our prison system; by 2009, that number had increased to 1.5 million incarcerated (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). A deliberate, intense focus is needed to disrupt and redirect the current educational trajectory for African American males. It appears that attention to disciplinary policies and practices must be one element of that focus.

Schools are not attenuating discrepancies in either the reliance on punitive disciplinary actions or the disproportionate number of African American males who are subjected to those actions. For over 25 years at the national, state, district, and site levels, African American male students have been suspended at rates two to three times that of other students (Han & Akiba, 2011). They are also overrepresented in terms of office referrals and school expulsions (Han & Akiba, 2011). Harsher and more extreme disciplinary consequences toward African American male students have increased significantly over the past several years. They are often at least two times, and in most cases three times, more at risk of being suspended as White students (Han & Akiba, 2011).

It may be instructive to critically examine the race and gender characteristics of the teaching force. The teaching force in most school districts in the nation is
predominantly White and female (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Townsend (2000) suggested that the unfamiliarity of White teachers with the interactional patterns that characterize many African American males may cause those teachers to interpret impassioned or emotive interactions as combative or argumentative, thus leading to referrals for disrespect, defiance, or disruption. Statistics show that only 6% of those in the teaching profession are African American. Of those, only 1% are African American males, and 83% are White and female. There has been a 66% decline in the number of African American teachers over the past several decades (Kunjufu, 2011).

It may also be instructive to examine the types of practices, programs, and professional development that led some schools to adopt more equitable and effective discipline plans. Less punitive and more proactive alternatives are suggested as strategies to reduce the negative impact of exclusionary discipline in schools. They include, but are not limited to, the implementation of interventions such as social skills training and anger management programs. Those types of interventions target specific student needs. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) offer more comprehensive approaches to minimizing school disruption by incorporating proactive alternatives such as positive discipline, school management, and a tiered approach to addressing the increasing behavioral needs of students (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

Schools do not seem to be attenuating the problems experienced by African American males in society. Instead, the experiences African Americans males are subjected to in schools seem to parallel those they experience outside of school. In other words, the disproportionately high incidence of school disciplinary actions and school failure among African American youth is comparable to the disproportionately high
number of African American adult males who are unemployed and in the penal system. How can the predicament of African American adults be improved if schools do not end the cycle of school failure for this demographic? At issue is the fact that, at best, schools are having no positive effects on adult outcomes; instead, they may be contributing to the problems African American males experience later in life. A critical analysis of disproportionately high number of disciplinary actions based on race should include a review of at least five bodies of evidence:

1. The achievement gap and African American males.
2. The relationship between school behavior and academic performance.
3. Disciplinary referrals and actions involving African American males.
4. The cultural competence of teachers and its influence on teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors.
5. The disciplinary approaches and choices available to schools and teachers, and the effectiveness and impact on those approaches.

In summary, schools are responsible for leveling the playing field for adult success. Increasing numbers of educational policymakers, researchers, and practitioners are questioning the overuse, and efficacy, of punitive disciplinary actions (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Furthermore, schools must determine whether there is a higher use of these punitive measures in their schools than in others (Skiba & Rausch, 2006) and whether that overuse is disproportionately applied to any subgroups of students (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). The statistics on the disproportionate problems African American males experience in school and adulthood is cause for concern and deserves attention and action. To say that African American males are performing poorly in school is a gross
understatement. Sociologists, parents, and educators are all in agreement that many circumstances have led to this dismal state of affairs. The disproportionately high incidence of more severe disciplinary actions on this demographic must be explored, as it may have a contributory effect on achievements in school and beyond. There is no solid research that validates the use of severe discipline to deter negative student behavior in the future; however, schools continue to use that approach. Therefore, school leaders must reexamine their schools’ disciplinary practices. They must then make changes based on research and equity.

**Statement of the Problem**

Too many schools rely on reactive punitive disciplinary actions as the main feature of their site disciplinary plans. Further, many schools employ those actions at a higher rate than similar schools and other schools in their district. The efficacy of relying on punitive actions is being questioned; in fact, negative effects of these practices are being documented (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Finally, overuse of those procedures seems to be resulting in disproportionate use among certain subgroups of students (e.g., African American and Hispanic males). Specific to this study is the overuse of those punitive actions school-wide and the disproportionately high numbers of referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and other punitive consequences assigned to African American males. African American males are also disproportionately performing below proficiency standards and graduation rates. A number of factors that could positively impact those statistics have been posited, one of which is the benefit of creating a school-wide culture that invests in and values positive and restorative disciplinary actions. Another key factor is the performance set of classroom teachers (including their competencies, skills, culture,
attitudes, and actions) and how it may be enhanced to improve the performance of all students in general and African American students in particular.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine what teacher competencies, skills, attitudes, and actions may lead to a positive school-wide decrease in suspensions and expulsions and their disproportionately frequent assignment to African American males. Also, to examine the implications that knowing those skills, attitudes, and actions may have for professional development, as well as for hiring, evaluation, and retention processes and decisions.

**Research Questions**

1. What impact does implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports plan have on the school-wide disciplinary outcomes of an urban middle school?
   a. What is the impact on African American male students?
   b. What is the impact on the rest of the student body?

2. What are the teachers who implement PBIS with fidelity experiencing in their classrooms in regard to student behavior and academic achievement?
   a. Experiences with African American male students.
   b. Experiences with the rest of the student body.

3. What impact did the implementation of a school-wide PBIS plan have on the culture of Watson Middle School? (An inventive name is being used for the school for purposes of this study.)
Overview of Methodology

This study sought to further develop the research on the overuse of punitive disciplinary actions and the overrepresentation and disproportionately high number of African American males being subjected to those discipline practices. A design study approach was used to explore the research questions. Design experiments are conducted to develop theories targeting specific processes. According to Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, and Schauble (2003), design experiments result in greater understanding of a complex system involving multiple elements of different types and levels.

The intent of this study was to investigate what teachers are doing differently in their classrooms that result in less disruptive behaviors by African American male students. The study used existing research and theories; it also created experiments to test those theories. The design study approach has two sides. The prospective side involves developing the hypothesis with the means of supporting it in mind in order to expose the details of the process to scrutiny. The reflective side of design experiments is conjecture-driven tests. The initial design is a conjecture about the means of supporting particular interactions between teachers and African American male students as they are realized in the classroom. The prospective and reflective aspects of the design study allow for a process of generating and refuting conjectures. As each conjecture is refuted, another is developed and tested. The result is a design process with cycles of invention and revision.

In contrast to most research methodologies, the design study methodology has the potential for quick results that link directly to the types of problems that are prevalent throughout the nation’s educational system.
Limitations of the Study

While the design study approach has strengths and is an appropriate design for this study, it also had several limitations. Observer bias may have intervened as the researcher conducted classroom observations. In addition, given that the researcher is also the principal of the school, teachers and students may have answered questions in a way they believed the principal wanted them to.

Significance of Research

Consensus is growing that suspensions, expulsions, and other punitive disciplinary actions are overused in schools despite allegations that those practices are ineffective and counterproductive (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). As a result, educational leaders are challenged to create positive alternatives that result in safe and productive schools and classrooms (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Furthermore, in recent years the plight of African American males in public education has become increasingly alarming. In most American inner cities, African American male students, at every level from kindergarten through 12th grade, are turning off on education in epidemic numbers (Tyre, 2006). The link from the schoolhouse to the jailhouse has never been stronger. The U.S. Department of Justice’s (2007) Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that in 2006 the number of inmates in state and federal prisons increased to over one and a half million. Thirty-five percent of state and federal male prisoners were African American in 2006, even though African Americans constituted only 12.4% of the U.S. population that year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

In light of the ever-growing achievement gap between African American males and their White counterparts, schools continue to suspend and expel African American
male students at much higher rates than any other ethnicity (Skiba et al., 2002). The present study therefore is concerned with reducing punitive disciplinary practices that have, at best, questionable value and with reducing the disproportionately high use of those practices on African American male students.

Teachers are arguably the most important part of the equation in regard to African American male students’ success or failure in school. They may view African American males as individuals who do not fit into school norms (Cassella, 2003). Therefore, studying teacher perceptions and beliefs is significant for a couple of reasons. First, teachers who believe that students who do not conform to a teacher’s perceptions of educational norms often tend to label those students as being dangerous and/or troublemakers (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This perspective—coupled with teachers’ fear, anxiety, and the thought of losing control of their classrooms—can lead teachers and administrators to apply harsher consequences to African American male students.

Second, teachers differ in terms of their knowledge of different cultures. Scholars suggest that teacher referral biases actually contribute to the disproportionately high number of disciplinary referrals for African American males, as opposed to the students’ actual behavior (Skiba et al., 2002).

As educators and researchers, we cannot deny that we face a massive problem that requires an immediate nationwide response. An abundant amount of research clearly demands that we explore alternative means of addressing campus discipline in general and addressing the plight of African American male students in particular. This study focuses on changing school culture as well as teacher practices.
**Definition of Terms**

*Expulsion*: A disciplinary sanction imposed for prohibited conduct committed by a student. Generally, an expulsion is when a student is permanently removed from a school system. For certain serious offenses, if a student is expelled, no other school system must enroll the student, even if the student’s family moves to a new town (MassLegalServices.org, 2014).

*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*: A process for creating school environments that is more predictable and effective for achieving academic and social goals (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2014).

*Racial discrimination*: Race discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because he or she is of a certain race or because of personal characteristics associated with race (such as hair texture, skin color, or certain facial features). Color discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of skin color complexion. Race or color discrimination can involve treating someone unfavorably because the person is married to or associated with a person of a certain race or color or because of a person’s connection with a race based organization or group, or an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain color (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], n.d.).

*Restorative practices*: Restorative practices is a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making. Restorative practices is defined as:

In education provides students and educators with skills to collaboratively address conflict, bullying, and other risk behaviors. The underlying principle of the
Restorative practices program is that people are more empowered, productive, and cooperative when those in positions of power do things with them rather than for them. (Vossekuil & Rettman, 2014, Interventions section, para. 4)

**Special education**: The education of children who differ socially, mentally, or physically from the average to such an extent that they require modifications of usual school practices. Special education serves children with emotional, behavioral, or cognitive impairments or with intellectual, hearing, vision, speech, or learning disabilities; gifted children with advanced academic abilities and with orthopedic or neurological impairments (“Special Education,” 2012).

**Suspend**: The act of forcing someone to leave a place for usually a short period of time as a form of punishment: to debar temporarily especially from a privilege, office, or function—suspend a student from school (“Suspend,” 2003).

**Zero tolerance**: A policy of punishing any infraction of a rule, regardless of accidental mistakes, ignorance, or extenuating circumstances. In schools, common zero-tolerance policies concern possession or use of drugs or weapons. Students and sometimes staff, parents, and other visitors who possess a banned item for any reason are always punished. These policies are promoted as preventing drug abuse and violence in schools (“Zero Tolerance (Schools),” 2012).
It appears useful to examine the impact of the overuse of punitive disciplinary actions on students who experience those consequences disproportionately. Several factors have been posited as contributing to the disproportionately high numbers of referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and punitive consequences assigned to African American males. A number of factors have also been studied in regard to the disproportionately high number of African American males who perform below academic proficiency and do not graduate. Literature regarding a number of contributing factors will be reviewed in this chapter.

Wynn (2007) cited the following statistics: African Americans have higher unemployment rates, lower labor force participation rates, and lower high school graduation and college enrollment rates, while ranking first in incarceration and homicide as a percentage of the population. The leading cause of death for African American men between the ages of 15 and 24 was homicide. While representing only 6% of the population, African American men represented 49% of prison inmates. Four percent of African American males attended college, while 23% of college age was incarcerated or on probation (2000 Census, as cited in Wynn, 2007). Life outcomes are influenced, in part, by school experiences.

The disparity in discipline applied toward African American students, especially African American males, likely expands the achievement gap and also influences the experiences of those students later in life in profound ways. Some research suggests that when African American males enter school, their educational path is altered by situational variables (Brown, 2007; Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). Those situational variables
include experiencing harsher discipline practices, being taught by unprepared teachers, and being referred to special education classes (Skiba et al., 2002). Those variables are exacerbated by the large number of schools that build their discipline policies primarily on punitive versus restorative practices (Skiba et al., 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003; Zeidenberg & Schiraldi, 2002). The combination of those factors appears to relate to the achievement gap that places African American males among the lowest performing groups (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The discipline gap results in African American males being punished disproportionately more often and more severely than most other peer groups, and the referral gap results in African American males being referred disproportionately for special education services (U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2000). The combination of those factors within the education system has also purportedly contributed to the overrepresentation of African American males in prison.

The most constructive means of thwarting the link between the lack of school success and dismal post-school outcomes for African Americans males logically begins with ameliorating the former hurdle for this group. This literature review is designed to put outcomes in statistical context and then to examine school factors that may be related to school success or failure.

This literature review will first present studies and statistics that establish the existence and implications of:

- The achievement gap and African American males at risk.
- The relationship between school behavior and academic performance.
- Disciplinary referrals and actions involving African American males.
After those statistics and relationships are detailed, the remainder of the chapter will review the factors that appear to relate to school performance:

1. The cultural competence of teachers and its influence on teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors.

2. The disciplinary approaches and choices available to schools and teachers, and the effectiveness and impact of those approaches.

**The Achievement Gap and African American Males**

“California touts some of the highest educational standards in the country. Yet when it comes to the state’s African-American students, these standards have proved to be little more than a mirage, forever out of reach” (Education Trust-West, 2010, p. 1). That cynical statement opens Education Trust-West’s (2010) research report, *Opportunity Lost: The Story of African-American Achievement in California, 2010.* The summary precedes a table provided in the report that justifies the dire findings (see Table 1).

The achievement gap between the academic performances of Black and White students has been well documented (S. Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2004). The Council of the Great City Schools (2010) published a report titled *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools,* in which differences in National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading tests, as well as other demographic data, were used to document the magnitude of the gap. The report clearly establishes the gap is greatest and most bleak for African American males. The report found that only 12% of African American fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading, compared with 38% of White boys; and only 12% of African American eighth-grade boys are proficient in math,
Table 1

African-American Student Performance by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student performance</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American children enrolled in a high-quality preschool, compared with 30% of White children</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American second-graders proficient in English Language Arts</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American eighth-graders proficient in English Language Arts</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American middle and high school students proficient in Algebra 1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American students who graduate from high school in 4 years</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American graduates who complete high school with the coursework needed for admission to the University of California or California State Universities—yet many of those students will not have the test scores and grades necessary to be truly eligible to enroll</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American public high school graduates who enroll in a 4-year public university in California</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

compared with 44% of White boys. The analysis of the results on the national tests highlighted that math scores in 2009 for African American boys were not much different from those of African American girls in Grades 4 and 8, but African American boys lagged behind Hispanics of both sexes, and they fell behind White boys by at least 30 points, a gap sometimes interpreted as a disparity of three academic grades. In high school, African American males dropped out at nearly twice the rate of White boys, and their SAT critical reasoning scores were on average 104 points lower.

The Council of the Great City Schools (2010) report noted that poverty alone does not seem to explain the differences: as determined by qualifying for subsidized school lunches, poor White boys do just as well as African American boys who do not live in poverty. Consider the following findings from the report:

- In 2009, the average reading scale score of eighth-grade Black males in large cities (LC) who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) was 17 points lower than eighth-grade White males in national public schools (NP) eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The average reading scale score of eighth-grade Black males in large cities (LC) who were not eligible for free or reduced price lunch (Non-FRPL) was 7 points lower than White males in national public schools (NP) who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) in 2009. (p. 33)

- Between 2003 and 2009, the percentage of large city (LC) eighth-grade Black males who were not eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (Non-FRPL) and were performing at or above Proficient levels in reading was at least six percentage points lower than the percentage of White males nationwide (NP)
who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and performing at or above Proficient levels. (p. 33)

- In 2009, the average mathematics scale score of fourth-grade Black males in large cities (LC) who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) was 20 points lower than fourth-grade White males in national public schools (NP) who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and 8 points lower than Black males in large cities (LC) who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Non-FRPL) in 2009. (p. 43)

- In 2009, the percentage of large city (LC) Black males who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Non-FRPL) and were performing at or above Proficient levels in mathematics was 11 percentage points lower than the percentage of White males in national public schools (NP) who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and were performing at or above Proficient levels. (p. 43)

- In 2009, the average mathematics scale score of fourth-grade Black males in large cities (LC) who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) was 20 points lower than fourth-grade White males in national public schools (NP) who were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch (FRPL) and 8 points lower that Black males in large cities (LC) who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Non-FRPL) in 2009. (p. 43)

The most significant implications for the achievement gaps in reading and math are evident in the report’s documentation of post school and career planning (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2010). To that end, the report documents:
• In 2008, Black males were nearly twice as likely as White males to drop out of high school—9 percent of Black males, compared with 5 percent of White males.

• In 2007, Black students were less likely to graduate on time from public high school (completing grades 9 through 12 in four years) than White students. Eight out of 10 White students graduated from public high schools in four years, compared with six out of 10 Black students.

• In 2008, Advanced Placement test takers were more likely to be White students than Black students. Approximately 60 percent of AP test takers were white, 15 percent Hispanic, 10 percent Asian and 8 percent Black.

• In 2009, the average SAT scores of Black males were lower than the average scores of White males in critical reading, mathematics, and writing. The gap between White and Black students taking the SAT was 104 points in critical reading, 120 points in mathematics, and 99 points in writing.

• In 2009, the average ACT scores for Black students were below the average score for White students in English, mathematics, and reading. The gap between White and Black students was six points in English, five points in mathematics, and six points in reading.

• In 2009, few Black students met the ACT college readiness benchmark in reading, mathematics, or English. At least three times as many White students as Black students met the college readiness standards for reading; four times as many for mathematics; and twice as many for English. (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2010, p. 75)
Clearly, an achievement gap exists between African American males and other peer groups. The gap seems pervasive throughout the students’ educational experience; therefore, the need to further study, understand, and attenuate this performance is warranted (Education Trust-West, 2010).

Achievement and opportunity gaps begin in elementary school and continue through high school and into college for African Americans and Latino males. For students who will be California’s future workforce, advancing to the next grade does not necessarily mean advancing in achievement. Student achievement declines and opportunity gaps persist from one grade to the next. As a result, African Americans and Latinos graduate from high school at a lower rate than their White classmates. Even when they do make it to graduation, they are too often unprepared for postsecondary education and career opportunities. Of those who enter college, a significant number do not obtain a degree.

**The Relationship Between School Behavior and Academic Performance**

This section will review the relationship between problem behavior and academic achievement. Data indicate there is a relationship between school behavior and academic performance. Most studies have investigated this relationship by examining the relationship between disciplinary referrals, disciplinary actions, and academic achievement. Research specifically suggests that African American males who are frequently referred to the office, suspended, or expelled become academically disengaged (McNeely, Nonemaker, & Blum, 2002; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003). The relationship will also be examined between chronic absenteeism and academic achievement (L. L. Williams, 2000). In their review on that topic, Putnam, Horner, and Algozzine (2012)
found empirical studies at elementary, middle, and high school levels that indicated predictive relationships between academic achievement and disciplinary referrals and actions. McIntosh, Putnam, McKenna, and Filter (2006) found that reading problems in kindergarten were predictive of disciplinary referrals in the third grade. McIntosh et al. (2006) further established this predictive relationship, and Putnam et al. (2012) concluded from McIntosh et al.’s studies that early academic problems must be attenuated in order to prevent a negative spiral of achievement behavior. As students fall behind their peers in literacy, academic tasks become increasingly difficult and problem behaviors are more likely to occur.

The relationship between academic performance and problem behaviors has also been studied at the secondary levels. Tobin and Sugai (1999) found that disciplinary referrals and actions in sixth and eighth grade correlated with high academic failure. Their study was conducted at a high school in a medium-sized city in the northwestern part of the United States. The ethnic composition of the student body was 8% Native American, 1.7% African American, 2.7% Asian American, 4.4% Hispanic, and 90.3% White. The geographic area was considered low-level income, and both feeder middle schools were eligible for Chapter 1 funds from the government. The questions Tobin and Sugai sought to answer were:

1. What patterns in discipline referrals in grade 6 were associated with referrals for violence in grade 8?

2. Can chronic discipline problems be predicted? If so, which variables are the most useful predictors?
3. Are discipline referrals in grade 6 related to not being on track for graduation when in high school? (p. 41)

The study used 526 archived records of students who were in sixth grade in the years 1989-1992. The records for the study were picked randomly from students who were currently enrolled and students who were no longer enrolled. The variables used in the study included violent fighting in Grade 6 (VF6) or violent harassing in Grade 6 (VH6). Another predictor was the frequency of referrals for nonviolent types of misbehavior (NV6). Student GPA was also used as a predictor (GPA6). In addition, a student’s having contact with the Juvenile Justice system was also used as a predictor (JU6). The same variables were used for the eighth-grade students, with an additional predictor of chronic discipline problems measured in terms of duration (DU). High school measures related to whether a student was on track for graduation; on track was measured by having a GPA equal to or greater than 1.00 and being in a general or special education setting that leads to a high school diploma. The results of the study suggest that a discipline referral in the sixth grade for either violent or nonviolent behavior was positively associated with the number of referrals in later middle school years. The frequency of out-of-school suspensions in the ninth grade was predicted from the duration of discipline problems in Grades 7 and 8. About 60% of the students sampled were on track for graduation. The 40% who were not on track included the students with failing grades and a GPA of less than 1.00.

Conclusions drawn from the study include that even a few discipline referrals, and sometimes even just one referral, should be recognized as a warning of more problematic behavior to come. Discipline problems are a serious threat to a student’s chances of
successfully completing high school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). The findings also suggest that students who receive referrals in sixth grade should be identified as students who are in need of a behavioral support plan immediately, before the behavior escalates.

Putnam et al. (2012) reviewed studies in which self-reported discipline actions were correlated with lower grades among ninth graders. The relationship between behavioral problems and poor academic performance grew stronger during the middle school experience (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). The predictive relationship between middle school suspensions and academic performance highlighted that the relationship strengthens over the course of middle school, with problematic behavior linking to low standardized test results for both reading and math (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). The more severe the problematic behaviors, the larger the academic deficits (Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004); and as the reading scores of elementary and middle school students improved between third and sixth grade, disciplinary problems in seventh grade were significantly less (Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, & Catalano, 2004). The relationship between problematic behavior, disciplinary actions, and academic performance is well established in the literature. O’Connor, Dearing, and Collins (2011) found that relationships between academic failure and problematic behavior to be cited in the literature over a 70-year span.

Gregory et al. (2010) address the achievement gap as a direct result of the disproportionately high suspension and expulsion rates of students of color. They conclude, “[The] use of school exclusion as a discipline practice may contribute to the well-documented racial gaps in achievement” (p. 59). Researchers have grappled with the question of African American students’ overrepresentation in suspensions and
expulsions (González & Szecsly, 2004). Yet, African American males still lead all other ethnicities in suspensions and expulsions (González & Szecsly, 2004). Despite the lack of evidence that African American students exhibit higher levels of disruptive behavior nationwide, they account for just 17% of the student population but 33% of all suspensions (Education Trust-West, 2010). According to a nationally representative study utilizing parent reports, in 2003 African American male students were significantly more likely to be suspended than White or Asian students. Specifically, 1 in 5 African American male students were suspended compared to 1 in 10 White and Asian students (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007).

Behavioral problems within U.S. public schools are generally handled by suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity of the behavior. Research shows that frequent suspensions appear to significantly increase the risk of academic underperformance (Davis & Jordan, 1994). According to Fuentes (2003), the most nefarious implication of this policy is its negative impact on students’ academic performance. Students are essentially rendered incapacitated when they are suspended or expelled from school. Research underscores the importance of regular school attendance, access to high quality instruction, and opportunities to learn rigorous course content as essential to student success (Roby, 2003). In 1999, 35% of all African American students in Grades 7-12 had been suspended or expelled from school (DOE, 2000). The rate was 20% for Hispanics and 15% for Whites. African American children are labeled mentally retarded nearly 300% more times than White children, and only 8.4% of all African American males are identified and enrolled in gifted and talented classes (Wynn, 2007). The consistent pattern of disproportionately frequent discipline sanctions issued to
African American male students is more likely to exacerbate a cycle of academic failure, disengagement, and escalating rule-breaking (Arcia, 2006).

The research correlates an increase in suspension rates with lower academic performance (Putnam et al., 2012). In fact, Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, and Catalano (2006) found that suspensions increase the likelihood of subsequent behavioral problems. Therefore, the disproportionately high number of African American male suspensions may support the position of Gregory et al. (2010). They suggest that suspensions may actually further alienate students from their school experience, or as they call it, school bonding. They cite studies supporting school bonding as a factor that prevents maladaptive behavior (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). Epstein and Sheldon (2002) concluded that dropping out of school is not a single event; rather, it represents a long process of disengagement from school. There does seem to be a negative correlation between academic performance and suspensions (Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010). African American males do have a disproportionate number of suspensions (Lewis et al., 2010). African American males are most negatively affected by the achievement gap (Lewis et al., 2010). These relationships must be studied further and better understood in order to find more effective approaches to deal with those students’ behaviors and performance.

Suspensions and related disciplinary actions result in increased time out of the classroom and away from the learning environment. Missed instruction is a factor that impacts academic performance. Suspensions fit into a larger area of concern that has negatively correlated with academics, that of frequent or chronic absenteeism. Gottfried (2010) found a positive correlation between student attendance and academic
achievement. He evaluated a comprehensive data set of 86,000 elementary and middle school students in 223 schools in the School District of Philadelphia. Days spent in school linked to GPA as well as math and reading scores. A positive correlation between increased days in school and stronger academic performance was statistically confirmed.

In a report prepared by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (2011), the impact of absenteeism in New York City Schools was studied. The report concluded that absenteeism was undermining school performance. Attendance records and state assessment scores for 64,062 fourth graders attending 705 New York Public Schools were reviewed. The report indicated that 18% of the students missed more than 10% of the school year, which equates to 19 days. It also showed that African American, Hispanic, and Native American students were more likely to be chronically absent than White students. The findings raise several key points:

- Attendance and achievement are inextricably linked. This research, which focused on the connection between students’ third and fourth grade attendance and their performance on New York State Testing Program Grade 4 assessments, confirms that student attendance becomes an essential tool for improving achievement.

- Attendance data can be an indicator of students and schools at risk. Researchers have repeatedly identified chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 10 percent of the school year as a result of unexcused and excused absences—as a signal that students are headed off track academically. Our study confirms that poor attendance puts low-performing students at greater risk of educational failure.
• Improving attendance can reduce the achievement gap. The association between attendance and performance is found across socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. It is important to note, however, that Black and Hispanic students, the groups with the highest poverty rates, are more likely than White and Asian students to be chronically absent. Similarly, students from low-income families had lower attendance than their more affluent peers. This suggests that improving attendance can help reduce the achievement gaps among ethnic and socioeconomic groups. (Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc., 2011, p. 7)

Reducing chronic absence is essential in turning around under-performing schools. In 298 New York schools, at least 20% of fourth graders were chronically absent. These high rates of absenteeism correlated with low performance. We suspect poor overall attendance reflects the lack of a high quality, engaging curriculum. Improvements in curriculum and instruction are critical to school reform. Reform can only happen if the students are in the classroom.

The data reported in this section present a clear relationship between problematic behavior and academic performance. Murphy (2011) reported on data released regarding performance in the Oakland Public Schools. The report found that: one in every five of the district’s African American male students missed more than 18 days of school the previous year, making them chronically truant. The district’s overall absenteeism rate is also a concern, with 12% of students missing that many days. The suspension rate for African American males was 18%, compared to 3% for White males and 8% overall. Applied Survey Research (2011) found that children who were absent 10% of the time in
kindergarten through first grade on average performed 60 points lower in reading assessments than similar students with good attendance. Balfanz, Herzog, and Maclver (2007) found that 10% absenteeism in Grade 9 was predictive of dropping out later in high school.

Similar conclusions were also detailed in a report by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC, 2011) entitled Destination Graduation: Sixth Grade Early Warning Indicators for Baltimore City Schools, a report examining and tracking two cohorts of sixth graders. The study examined the longitudinal performance of more than 10,000 students. It was designed to identify early warning indicators of nongraduation. The results confirmed other studies cited in this review. The following were identified for sixth graders as early warning indicators of nongraduation:

1. Chronic absence (defined as missing 20 or more days of school);
2. Failing English, or math or both and/or a failing average for English, math, science, and social studies;
3. Being at least one year over age (suggesting an earlier retention); and
4. Being suspended for three or more days. (BERC, 2011, p. i)

Disciplinary Referrals and Actions and African American Males

In this section, literature will be reviewed in terms of how African American males are disciplined in schools. Data indicate that there are a disproportionately high number of African American males referred for disciplinary actions. Thirty years of research has demonstrated that an inequity exists between the number of European American and African American males punished through the use of exclusionary discipline practices (Costenbader & Markson, 1994, 1998; Fenning & Rose, 2007;
McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). One rationale put forth to explain the overrepresentation of African American males in the school discipline system is that African American males tend to display more disruptive behaviors than their peers. In accord with that notion, some researchers suggest that student behaviors differ by ethnicity, with African American males evidencing greater levels of aggressive behavioral difficulties in school (Hudley, 1993; Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Other researchers have failed to find support that African American males misbehave at significantly higher rates than White males (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Wu et al., 1982).

Researchers have grappled with the question of African American students’ overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline for the past three decades (González & Szecsy, 2004). Yet, African American male students still lead all other ethnicities in suspensions and expulsions (González & Szecsy, 2004). African American students are suspended or expelled at rates up to three times higher than those of other students (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1999). Despite the lack of evidence that African American students exhibit higher levels of disruptive behavior nationwide, they account for just 17% of the student population but 33% of all suspensions (Education Trust-West, 2010). Attempting to address why African American male students are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline, scholars (Bireda, 2002; Lewis et al., 2010; Tucker, 1999) have noted contributing factors that include:

- Racial and gender discrepancies in the dispensation of disciplinary measures that result in more severe consequences for African American males.

- The proliferation of the zero tolerance policies in urban schools.
• Interpersonal and cultural misunderstandings.
• Vague and ambiguous policies that give way to bias.
• The attitudes of school personnel.
• Parenting styles that do not foster in children a sense of accountability.

(Lewis et al., 2010, p. 10)

Researchers assert that negative views of young African American males largely emanate from environmental dynamics that influence how they are perceived (Lewis & Erskine, 2008). Many widely recognize that teachers frequently approach classes populated by low socioeconomic and African American males with a strong emphasis on controlling student behaviors. When disciplining African American students, teachers are likely to demonstrate reactions that appear to be more severe than required. Since Anglo and middle-class individuals occupy most positions of power in educational settings, decisions concerning behavioral expectations and infractions are set forth by prevailing beliefs and practices and often proceed unchallenged.

Casella (2003) explained that school personnel perceive African American male students as not fitting into the norm of the school. Teachers who do not have control of student behavior feel a sense of anxiety as it pertains to classroom management; consequently, those students are labeled as dangerous, troublemakers, or frequently, learning impaired.

Lewis et al. (2010) conducted a study of a Midwestern urban school district. The question they were trying to answer was: What is the resulting impact of disciplinary patterns and school district responses regarding African American academic achievement? Four interrelated objectives were developed to guide the analysis:
• To investigate all behavior occurrences among African American males in comparison to their peers in the 2005-2006 academic school year.

• To detail the discipline responses recommended by the school district for these offenses.

• To calculate the amount of class time missed as a result of school district prescribed resolutions.

• To provide a connection to performance on standardized test reporting for the larger African American student population in the district.

Among the 32,183 students, 21% were African American, 25% were Anglo, and 49% were Hispanic. Of the total student population, 6,801 students, or 24%, were African American males. The study was comparative in nature, and the data suggest that African American male students were not the most disruptive in the district. The data used in the study included the top 10 behavioral infractions for male students in Cascade Independent School District (CISD), 2005-2006. The study also included the overview, by race, of male students and their disciplinary encounters. Cross-racial comparisons of the top 10 behavioral resolutions for reports of disobedience in CISD, 2005-2006, and the top 10 behavioral resolutions for reports of truancy in CISD, 2005-2006, were also detailed. The results of the study showed that the Hispanic male students demonstrated the most disruptive behaviors. The study revealed the parity/inequity in the distribution of sanctions cross-racially with Anglo male students for acts of disobedience and truancy. The results were as follow: while 25% of Anglo male students got restricted recess for acts of disobedience, 33% of African American males received 2-day suspensions for the
same acts. The former response is considered less punitive, while the latter is considered more severe (Lewis et al., 2010).

The data made it clear that African American male students typically received harsher punishments than their Anglo counterparts for committing the same infractions. The findings are consistent with most of the existing literature, which suggests that students of color—and especially African American males—are susceptible to disproportionately harsher discipline practices.

A growing body of evidence suggests that teachers limit reprimands and punitive consequences to Black children, even when youths of other races engage in identical unsanctioned behaviors (Emilhovich, 1983; McCadden, 1998; Monroe, 2006; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Researchers (Lewis & Erskine, 2008; Noguera, 1995) and others argued that negative views of African American males largely emanate from environmental dynamics that circumscribe how the identities of young African American boys are perceived both inside and outside their communities. Current research further contends that African American students receive harsher punishments than their peers for subjectively defined offenses and that those inequities are most pronounced for African American males (A. A. Ferguson, 2001). Given the history of disciplinary actions taken against African American males, scholars have posed questions about their personal dispositions, family backgrounds, and socialization as reasonable foci for inquiry (McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1990). These studies have been situated largely outside the classroom.

Increased behavioral problems may also be related to classroom pedagogy. Nieto and Bode (2007) suggest that students of color are often subjected to the least engaging
types of curriculum and instruction and that this further adds to students’ disengagement with the culture of schooling. Changes in classroom instruction and improved literacy skills has been proposed as specific strategies to help African American boys better engage and behave (Slaughter-Defoe & Richards, 1995; Thompson, 2002). Evidence suggests that weak skills in reading comprehension and other academic areas correlate with behavioral problems. In Thompson’s (2002) study, many parents articulated the belief that nonchallenging course content contributed to student boredom, which led to problematic student behavior.

Exclusionary disciplinary policies by their very nature do not provide guidance or instruction. Those policies focus directly on harsh forms of punishment, which lead to students’ distrust toward adults and create adversarial and confrontational attitudes. Detrimental outcomes, coupled with evidence that exclusionary discipline is ineffective at improving student outcomes (Fenning & Rose, 2007), the disproportional overrepresentation of African American males as recipients of exclusionary discipline is cause for concern. Although data that details trends in the use of exclusionary discipline over time are sparse, recent research suggests that while the number of such incidents is increasing, the proportion of the student population affected has remained relatively stable. Skiba and Peterson (1999) shed light on why students of color are most vulnerable to falling into a web of exclusionary discipline consequences. Students of color are targeted by educators who fear losing control of the classroom rather than because they pose any actual threat of dangerousness (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Once removed from school, those who require the greatest assistance are then placed in a direct link to the prison system in what has been termed the school-to-prison
pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003). African American males are at the greatest risk for experiencing disciplinary practices that exclude them from the school environment. It is believed that their overrepresentation in experiencing these practices contributes to their involvement in the criminal justice system as they approach adolescence and enter adulthood. Furthermore, the requirement for academic achievement has heightened the pressure for administrators to remove children who do not fit the norms of the general population (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Clearly, this review established that the behavior of African American students and the responses of schools to that behavior is a factor that is impacting school and postschool success of those students.

**The Cultural Competence of Teachers and Its Influence on Their Perceptions, Expectations, and Behaviors**

This section of the literature review seeks to establish a relationship between school success among African American males and the cultural competence of their teachers. The literature reviewed suggests that a teacher’s cultural competence impacts his or her perceptions and expectations. Those constructs then influence a teacher’s behaviors, which link to instruction, student rapport, and home-school collaboration (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Teachers’ perceptions and expectations of their students are key mediating influences on decision making, as well as instructional behavior and classroom rapport, and those decisions and behaviors affect student performance (Ladson-Billings, 2006). When teachers’ perceptions and expectations are accurate, fair, and positive, their instructional effectiveness and classroom rapport can lead to more positive school performance (Bakari, 2003). The converse is also true (Bakari, 2003). One of the
variables that can affect positive and accurate perceptions and expectations is a teacher’s cultural competence. If a teacher shows a lack of cultural competence, it is possible her or his expectations may negatively impact student performance; in addition, the teacher’s interpretations of student behavior may lead to inappropriate responses (Bireda, 2002; Tucker, 1999). Cultural incompetence relates to decreases in student achievement and increases in disciplinary actions (Brace, 2011). A lack of cultural competence may be an artifact of negative and inaccurate stereotypes held in general society (Brace, 2011), and/or limited cultural experience, confidence, and identity between teachers and their student body (Brace, 2011).

Studies show the lack of school success for African American students is related to low teacher expectations. Numerous studies have found that teachers tend to have lower academic expectations of African American students, especially African American male students, than White students (R. F. Ferguson, 2003; Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). As a result, low expectations and other forms of discrimination can have adverse effects on the achievement of African American students. According to the African American Achievement Gap Report prepared for Washington State (Bailey & Dziko, 2008), public schools are based on an outmoded system that was not designed to ensure the success of the widely diverse students currently enrolled. Four goals believed to be critical to closing the achievement gap for African American students were highlighted in the report by Bailey and Dziko (2008), among others:

1. *Quality Teachers*—Establish a pipeline of quality teachers and administrators for high needs schools by prioritizing and providing incentives and awards for
the recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified teachers and administrators, especially African Americans. (p. 28)

2. Early Learning—1) Frame expectations for increased quality early education opportunities for African American children, and 2) offer all children the necessary early supports in life that lead to becoming stronger learners and provide for success in school. (p. 29)

3. Graduation Rates—If implemented the strategies which would pointedly reduce the high school dropout rates of African American students. . . . Profound changes in educator attitudes, dispositions and skills levels will lead to higher graduation rates not only for African American students, but for all students. (p. 31)

4. Postsecondary Education and Job Training—By 2018, increase the number of African American students entering and completing post-secondary education and/or job training to be at or above parity with the highest performing demographic group and to achieve 100% participation by 2024. (p. 35)

Low expectations for students can result in their having low expectations of themselves. Students take cues from their teachers’ attitudes and actions. Students who perceive that they are not expected to do well usually do not perform well; students who achieve success despite expectations that they will not are often regarded unfavorably by their teachers. In this way, many students meet their teachers’ expectations (Sprinthall, Sprinthall, & Oja, 1998). Unfortunately, the stereotypes that Americans have in regard to some races and ethnic groups have not disappeared through the generations. A study conducted by David R. Williams of the University of Michigan revealed that 45% of the
Whites that were surveyed believed that African Americans are lazy; 29% said African Americans are unintelligent; fewer than one in five considered African American to be hard workers; and 56% said that African Americans would rather live on welfare than work (D. R. Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Low expectations are known to deter achievement. Yet, the poison of low expectations for African Americans still persists (Bailey & Dziko, 2008). African American students are 1.42 times more likely to be identified as eligible for special education. Within specific categories, African American students are 2.7 times more likely to be identified as having an “emotional and behavioral disorder” than other students. The overenrollment of African Americans in special education is complemented by the underenrollment in programs for the highly gifted (Bailey & Dziko, 2008).

Research shows there is a strong correlation between student success and home-school connections (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Jones, 2011). The implications of that relationship of course increase as the population changes. The U.S. Department of Education predicted that by the year 2010 minority populations would become the majority populations in our schools (DOE, 2000). Cultural differences are among the barriers that limit effective home-school collaboration (Jones, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to connect home, school, and community with culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching. Research and practice demonstrates that strong home, school, and community connections not only help students make sense of the school curriculum but also promote literacy development (Schmidt, 2004). Jones emphasizes the need to create a school culture that is inclusive of the cultures of the racial and ethnic groups that comprise the student body and their families. Jones also stresses the importance of
teachers’ familiarity with the values and norms of their students’ cultures, including communication styles. When cultural differences are ignored, family and student fears and alienation increase. These disconnects then lead to a decrease in home-school collaboration and an increase in misbehavior and disciplinary issues. Edwards (2004) found this disconnect to be related to high dropout rates among students in urban and rural poverty areas.

Culture refers to the sum total ways of living developed by a group of human beings to satisfy biological and psychological need (Leighton, 1982). Ordinarily, culture includes patterns of thought, behavior, language, customs, institutions, and material objects (Leighton, 1982). Culture has also been defined as the integrated pattern of human behaviors that includes thoughts, communication, and actions. At times, cultural differences contribute to cultural conflict, particularly when the dominant cultural group imposes a universal imperative that presumes its way of thinking, behaving, and responding to the world is superior (Patton & Day-Vines, 2004). At the very least, school and family differences in thinking, behaving, and responding to the world can create cultural disconnects. All too often the culture at home and the culture at school remain in conflict with each other. Hence, there is a rift between African American students and the schools they attend. The disconnect between schools and the community has in large measure contributed to the academic failure, high rates of suspension and expulsion, and the overrepresentation of African American males in special education classes, as well as the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted education programs (Bireda, 2002; Lee, 1996; Patton, 1998).
Culturally responsive and relevant instruction helps forge connections with students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Learning becomes more meaningful and relevant as teachers draw upon students’ prior knowledge (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Despite the rise of multicultural education and increasingly diverse student bodies, which seemingly would help make cultural differences less of an issue, schools remain for the most part biased toward White middle-class values, belief systems, and expectations (George & Aronson, 2003).

According to Monroe (2006), the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy has implications that extend beyond academic achievement. Cultural competence or lack thereof, spills into other areas such as classroom management. The better equipped teachers are to deal with student conduct, the better positioned they are to perform their job responsibilities, which in turn facilitates a more effective learning environment. This form of cultural responsiveness is not limited by racial attributes; however, race remains particularly important in that the demographic composition of the nation’s teaching force is 86% Anglo (Golden, 2007). Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) found that several novice White teachers reported they often perceived lively debates occurring between African American males as suggestive of aggressive behaviors, when in fact those students perceived their engagements to be merely culturally expressive exchanges.

Studies have shown that successful interaction with African American male students has increased the likelihood of their successes in the classroom. Those interactions included proactive communication with parents and positive feedback to students regarding their academic performance and social behaviors in the classroom, as well as the larger school environment (Noguera, 2002). Researchers who have studied
effective schools for low-income African American students cite that supportive relations between teachers and students coupled with caring and accountability are essential ingredients for the students’ success (Noguera, 2002). The negative perception of African American males can be linked to a cultural mismatch of African American male students and their teachers. R. F. Ferguson (2003) revealed that teachers’ expectations for success were higher for White students than for African American students.

Although overt discrimination has declined, African American male students continue to be singled out because they do not fit into what is considered “the norm.” Student norm refers to the perceived way that a student is supposed to act, for example, sitting up straight and being attentive to the teacher, quiet, and well behaved. Research indicates that African American students perceive themselves to be discriminated against by their White teachers (Kailin, 1999; Rosenbloom & Way 2004). In a study of Chicago Public Schools, Kailin (1999) found that 46% of teachers reported hearing White teachers make racist remarks to Black students. Kailin also reported that 27% of teachers observed White teachers treating Black students substantially different from their White peers. The differences in treatment included incidents of African American students being ignored when they raised their hands, disproportionately disciplined for being late and frequently searched for weapons and drugs. The participants in Kailin’s study included African American and Caribbean Blacks. The hypotheses tested were:

1. Caribbean Black adolescents will perceive less teacher discrimination than African American adolescents.
3. More perceived teacher discrimination would be negatively associated with academic achievement after being controlled for demographic variables regardless of ethnicity.

3. Racial identity attitudes were expected to enhance academic achievement after being controlled for demographic variables and perceived teacher discrimination regardless of ethnicity.

Research suggests that differential expectations between the home and school lives of culturally diverse students may contribute to disciplinary disproportionality (Cartledge, Tillman, & Talbert-Johnson, 2001; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Classrooms are not culturally neutral but instead are made up of a host of culturally bound expectations about learning and behavior. Classroom norms are usually aligned with White middle-class values and orientations, such as individual praise (Lerman, 2000), competition (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005), and individualism (Boykin et al., 2005). Building on the knowledge and strengths students bring with them from their homes and communities validates who they are and sets high expectations for behavior and learning. Doing so comprehensively creates an environment where diversity is affirmed, while also establishing a cultural lens for determining normative behavior and learning expectations (Gay, 2000; King, 2004). Thus, when students’ home culture and school culture are very different, educators can easily misunderstand students’ behaviors and thus use instructional strategies and disciplines that are at odds with the students’ cultural norms (Delpit, 2001). Many African American male students are raised in such a way that they are highly physical and desire direct interaction. Therefore, a classroom that promotes interaction and movement
may better suit the learning styles of African American boys. If this is not the educator’s preference and the teacher reads the students’ behavior as disruptive, then he or she might focus on disciplining those students (George & Aronson, 2003).

Teachers aware of commonly documented forms of behavior known as “cool pose,” which have been found to exist among African American male populations, understand that those students are often simply demonstrating their thoughts through a linguistic exchange (Majors & Billson, 1992). The problem is that “cool pose” generally conflicts with constructed notions that teachers embrace regarding expected behaviors of whom they would classify as “good students.” Thus, African American males are often penalized or punished for behaviors that are deemed to be disruptive.

In some cases, a negative perception of African American male students may stem from White teachers’ lack of understanding about what it means to be Black in America. Teachers often view the behaviors of Black males as disruptive and deficient when compared to that of their peers (Weinstein et al., 2004). The play fighting of African American boys is often misconstrued as aggressive behavior. Because many teachers have little if any preservice training in cultural awareness or the social world of many African American males, a cultural mismatch may result in the classroom (Weinstein et al., 2004).

It is critical to examine subgroups among African American youth in the United States because they are characterized by diverse ethnic backgrounds with divergent cultures, histories, ideologies, and interests. Both individual and group characteristics have distinct implications for academic achievement and life outcomes (Rong & Brown, 2002). Even as those ethnic differences manifest themselves, the overwhelming majority
of educational research is conducted in such a way as to categorize African American people as one unitary ethnic group. Research on the effects of teacher perceptions on African American male educational outcomes continues to show that teachers perceive African American males to be academically inferior, as well as lacking adequate leadership and social skills. Rong (1996) studied the effects of teachers’ race and gender on their perceptions of the abilities of Black and White elementary school children; she found that teachers tended to rate students more highly if they shared the same racial or gender identity. Thus, White female teachers rated White female students highest, just as Black female teachers rated Black female students highest. White and Black male teachers were not included in Rong’s study because of the absence of sufficient numbers of Black male teachers.

In their study, Rong and Brown (2002) specifically examined associations between perceived teacher discrimination and academic achievement. Through the study, they hoped to address three major gaps in previous literature: (a) the lack of research examining Black adolescents’ capacity to achieve despite risks; (b) the lack of research on Black adolescents’ perceptions of teacher discrimination and its influence on success (Kasper & Noh, 2001; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004); and (c) the lack of research on within group variation among Blacks living in the United States (Phelps, Taylor, & Gerrard, 2001; Rong & Brown, 2002).

For teachers, counselors, and administrators to help change what is deemed inappropriate school behavior, they must understand the logic that governs certain decisions of African American male adolescents. Without that critical information as context, many well-intentioned interventions will not succeed (Noguera, 2002). Research
conducted on this topic has been particularly useful in identifying recurrent trends, isolating reasons that prompt behavioral sanctions, and making connections to sociocultural factors that invite unequal treatment (Monroe, 2006; Skiba, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004).

The subculture of urban African American males often endorses values that reflect the direct opposite of healthy psychosocial functioning. Behaviors of academic underachievement, aggression, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and illegal activity are behaviors that represent a reactionary stance toward a society that devalues African American manhood (Corbin & Pruitt, 1999; Lee, 1996; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000). Historically, the church played an important role within the African American community. However, over the past few decades there has been a significant decline in terms of the connection between family and church. The influence that the church once had is a factor to be considered. Other factors that have contributed to the maladaptive behaviors of African American males include:

a. Premature parenting by individuals whose own psychosocial needs remain unmet.

b. Ineffective adult male role models resulting from the historical emasculation of many African American males.

c. The impersonal nature of urban environments.

d. Decreasing access to legitimate opportunities.

e. Dwindling school and community resources jeopardize the psychological well-being of many adolescents. (Day-Vines & Day-Hairson, 2005, p. 239)
Those factors and others leave an alarming number of young African American males to construct a misguided definition of African American manhood (Day-Vines, 2005).

Making connections and building long-lasting and trusting relationships requires the conscious effort of teachers, administrators, counselors, support staff, and all other school stakeholders to learn all they can about the African American male subculture, so they are better prepared to understand the tendencies of those students to exhibit a tough facade and deny personal vulnerability (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Poussaint & Alexander, 2000). Many African American male students outwardly exude a false bravado because any expression of human frailty, or of a desire to achieve academically and engage in prosocial behaviors, may elicit ridicule and humiliation from their peers. Inwardly, the students may be harboring feelings of self-doubt, insecurity, fear, and internal strife that lead to self-destructing behaviors (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). African American cultural norms discourage intimate self-disclosures with strangers (Tucker, 1999). Thus, establishing a trust between the school, student, parent, and community is essential to the success of the student in the academic environment.

Cultural misunderstandings contribute greatly to the preponderance of discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions (Bireda, 2002; Tucker, 1999), yet teacher education students learn nothing about culture during their teacher education courses. Too often school personnel use the word culture or the phrase it’s their culture when explaining issues that range from failure at school to problems with behavioral management and discipline (Ladson-Billings, 2006). African American males who have high levels of ethnic affiliation exhibit a distinctive set of communication styles that does not necessarily conform to the norms and expectations required in mainstream educational
settings. Often their communication with one another and with school personnel is loud, intense, and what might appear to be confrontational. In contrast, Caucasian students rely on more dispassionate, impersonal, and emotionally restrained communication styles (Cartledge & Middleton, 1996). Although there is nothing inherently wrong with either style, certain interpersonal styles may be interpreted as rude, demeaning, and inappropriate, thereby possibly leading to disciplinary referrals for African American males.

This section of the literature review has focused on the impact teacher perceptions and attitudes can have on student success. Studies have suggested that a lack of cultural competence can undermine the effectiveness of instruction and preclude establishing a productive rapport with students and their families. The negative implications of those cultural disconnects relates to diminished student success and the increase in disciplinary actions among African American males. Teachers’ cultural competence is an important variable in the academic success or failure of African American male students. Having “skilled, culturally competent teachers” was the first of six recommendations of the Task Force on the Education of Maryland’s African American males (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], 2007). According to Monroe (2006) and Golden (2007), cultural competency training should be included in teacher preparation programs, especially as it relates to African American males; in addition, as part of the training teachers must demonstrate effectiveness in this area. Given the overwhelming homogeneity of Maryland’s teaching force (76.3% White female) and its increasingly diverse student population, it is predictable that sociocultural conflicts occur. It is also predictable that these conflicts breed bias, miscommunication, low expectations, low
motivation, and ineffective teaching. If we continue to produce teachers who look dramatically different from the students they teach, we must prepare them professionally, emotionally, and culturally for those differences. Colleges of education should train prospective teachers who intend to work for the MSDE in cultural competency standards, and the MSDE should hold teachers accountable for meeting them. The MSDE (2007) should also use the Social Studies Task Force, convened in 2004, to advocate for poor, minority, and urban children in terms of culturally relevant curriculum and culturally competent teachers.

**The Disciplinary Approaches and Choices Available to Schools and Teachers and the Effectiveness and Impact of Those Approaches**

This section of the review addresses the choices and approaches schools and teachers use as the foundation of their discipline policies. A distinction is made in this section between punitive versus restorative disciplinary policies and approaches. Punitive approaches are ones in which punitive consequences are used as a threat to thwart inappropriate behavior, and punitive consequences are used as preferred response to inappropriate behavior when it occurs (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Restorative practices refer to a number of approaches by which the culture of the school and the behaviors of the teacher seek to reduce inappropriate behaviors by creating a more positive, culturally inclusive learning community, and the preferred response to inappropriate behavior is through instruction and restoration (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

**Punitive Approaches**

The traditional approach to discipline problems is to apply a hierarchy of punitive consequences. At the top of the chain is suspension and, ultimately, expulsion. Earlier
in this chapter, statistics detailed the disproportionately high percentage of African American males who experience those punitive consequences (Fenning & Rose, 2007). There is little evidence to suggest that applying those approaches is proving to be an effective and efficient means of closing the achievement gap (Fenning & Rose, 2007). In fact, the data suggest that the increased and disproportionately high numbers of suspensions and expulsions of those students may be contributing to, rather than limiting, the achievement gap (K. Anderson, Howard, & Graham, 2007).

Behavioral problems within U.S. public schools are generally handled by a student’s suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity of the behavior. Those practices stem in large part from the widespread adoption of the zero tolerance policy approach to discipline (Leone, Mayer, Malmgren, & Meisel, 2000; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Past research that has taken on the topic of zero tolerance policies has focused on the implications of the policy on the most impacted victims, African American male students. According to Fuentes (2003), the most nefarious implication of this policy is its negative impact on students’ academic performance. Students are essentially rendered incapacitated when they are suspended from the classroom setting, whether for just 2 days or more (Fuentes, 2003). If African American male students are removed from the educational environment for extended periods of time, there is less time dedicated to learning. Because those students are not actively engaged in the classroom learning context, their opportunities for academic development are significantly diminished, as detailed previously; suspensions decrease the bond between student and school, thereby increasing the student’s disengagement (Townsend, 2000). Literature cited earlier in this section also highlighted the relationship between school absence and school failure
(Fuentes, 2003), another clear indicator that the efficacy of absences forced by suspension must be carefully considered.

In the context of suspensions involving African American and White students, African American males have the highest reported rates; they are followed by White males, African American females, and White females, respectively (Skiba, 2002). Bireda (2002) attributed those statistics in part to: (a) racial discrepancies in the dispensation of disciplinary measures that result in more severe consequences for African American males, (b) the proliferation of zero tolerance policies, and (c) the attitudes of school personnel. Literature cited previously in this section also explored the negative relationship between the cultural competence of teachers and the disproportionately high numbers of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions involving African American males (Skiba et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000; Wu et al., 1982).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) requires that all schools be safe and drug-free environments. Districts are responsible for a board-approved code of behavior and discipline for students (NCLB, 2001). Although those basic tenets were fueled by good intentions, they inadvertently resulted in negative consequences (Fenning, Wilczynski, & Parraga, 2000). Fenning et al. (2000) conducted a content analysis of 64 secondary-school discipline codes of conduct using the analysis codes rating scale, a system used to classify formal written responses to behaviors ranging from mild to severe. They found that reactive punitive measures were the most common response to code infractions. Suspension was listed as an option in 33% of policies reviewed for tardy behavior. That means the consequence for missing school was for the student to miss more school. Fenning et al. defined reactive measures as those that are punitive in
nature without any direct teaching of positive behaviors. Reactive measures were the most likely consequences awarded regardless of the problem behavior.

**Proactive and Restorative Approaches**

Related research suggested that schools that rely on punitive procedures are more likely to have overrepresentation in those exclusionary consequences (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). There is scant evidence that reactive and primarily punitive approaches to problem behavior result in less problem behavior. Literature cited earlier in this chapter suggested that being suspended was a predictor of future suspensions (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that punitive consequences, such as suspensions, are positively correlated with a lack of success in both school and postschool settings (Lassen et al., 2006). Additional study in the terms of developing discipline teams for creating equitable discipline practices is essential. Empirical data should lead to a critical examination in school-wide discipline policies that result in the disproportionate removal of African American students from the classroom—and ultimately their removal from school and their placement into the school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Summarily, data have been reported that African American males have the disproportionately highest suspension rates and are among the least likely to have school and postschool success (Monroe, 2006). At the very least, the studies and statistics suggest that the efficacy of alternative approaches to systems that primarily rely on reactive and punitive approaches must be reconsidered and studied (Wald & Losen, 2003).
The literature reviewed in this section indicates that written discipline policies must be considered as culturally responsive approaches to student behavior. Schwartz (2001) suggested that the definitions of behaviors and their consequences that are placed in those policies should be developed and reviewed by a team of diverse stakeholders for clarity and understanding. Fenning (2005) added that rather than relying on punishment, it is paramount to integrate proactive approaches that directly teach and acknowledge expected behavior. In addition, Fenning and Rose (2007) stressed the need for professional development in terms of how students are identified in the classroom for removal, as well as the awareness of racism in educators’ interpretations of social exchanges involving students.

Efforts to change the punitive nature of discipline policies in favor of more proactive responses to students’ behavioral concerns not only help reduce the tendency toward unfair practices but also generate more effective solutions. Ted Wachtel (as cited in EducationScotland.gov., n.d.), president of the Institute for Restorative Practices, put it this way: “Restorative practices are fundamentally rooted in a philosophy. They are not templates. It is this philosophy which ought to guide the way we act in our dealings with others” (slide 6). He expanded beyond the criminal justice system to develop other beneficiaries of restorative practices, which offer a common thread to tie together theory, research, and practice in education, counseling, criminal justice, social work, and organizational management (Wachtel, 2012).

The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive
changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them. (Wachtel, 2012, para. 2)

Wachtel (2012) stresses that this alternative approach first requires a philosophical change that begins as a philosophical approach that leads to a different way of preventing and responding to problematic behavior.

Figure 1 provides Blood and Thorsborne’s (2005) framework to illustrate how a philosophy of restorative practices would help create a relational culture within a school. Literature cited earlier in this review suggested that relational culture was an element that is developed with culturally competent teachers (Tucker, 1999) and is missing in highly punitive-based schools (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

Blood and Thorsborne’s (2005) model is adapted from Wachtel’s (1999) illustration of how restorative practices are distinguished from punitive practices. The vertical axis refers to the amount of control and attention that is used, and the horizontal axis refers to the level of support that is provided to the student. Blood and Thorsborne describe the four quadrants as:

- Practice which lacks structure and support is seen as neglectful—(NOT engaging at any level)
- Practice which is high in control and low on support (relationships) is experienced as authoritarian and punitive—(doing things TO people/power over).
- Practice which is low on control and high on support is experienced as permissive—(doing things FOR people/disempowering/non challenging).
Blood and Thorsborne (2005) developed the framework as a means to allow others to more easily identify ineffective practice and confirm that the ideal (the top-right quadrant) provides direction for organizational change and preferred outcomes. That quadrant also illustrates that restorative practices require a set of active practices and policies rather than a laissez-faire response to behavior. Amstutz and Mullet (2005)
illustrated the paradigm shift that distinguishes traditional discipline from restorative practices in Table 2.

Table 2

*Amstutz and Mullet's Paradigm Shift*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional discipline</th>
<th>Restorative practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School and rules violated</td>
<td>People and relationships violated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice focuses on establishing guilt</td>
<td>Justice identifies needs and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability = punishment</td>
<td>Accountability = understanding impact, repairing harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice directed at offender while victim is ignored</td>
<td>Offender, victim and school all have direct roles in justice process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and intent outweigh whether outcome is positive/negative</td>
<td>Offender is responsible for harmful behavior, repairing harm and working toward positive outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opportunity for remorse or amends</td>
<td>Opportunity given for amends and expression of remorse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


John Herner (2011) and his colleagues at Windham Primary School in Windham, Maine, have documented their multiyear process of adapting Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), also known as Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS). They assert that schools have a responsibility to teach desirable behaviors, rather than to just punish aberrant ones. That philosophy is built into the fabric, beliefs, and practices of the school. It is a part of its inclusive culture. Herner challenges practitioners with the following quote:
If a child does not know how to read, we *teach*.

If a child does not know how to swim, we *teach*.

If a child does not know how to multiply, we *teach*.

If a child does not know how to drive, we *teach*.

If a child does not know how to behave, we . . .

*Teach? . . . Punish?*

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others? (p. 1)

Fenning and Rose (2007) suggested that schools engage in proactive and fair discipline policies for all, according to the following process:

- Review of discipline data to determine what infractions result in suspensions (e.g., whether minor nonviolent offenses result in suspension) and if certain groups are overrepresented in the exclusionary discipline consequences.
- The creation of a collaborative discipline team to create proactive discipline consequences that are fair to all.
- The provision of school-wide professional development to help promote cultural competence, particularly around issues of classroom management and teacher-to-student interchanges.
- The development of more proactive school discipline policies for all students, based on models of positive behavioral support.

Punitive discipline practices need to be revised to reflect more proactive models that directly teach expected behaviors and are consistent with models of PBS to be effective for all students (Sugai & Horner, 2002).
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) were designed in recognition of the shortcomings of zero tolerance policies and the application of generic reactionary interventions that are doomed to failure (Walker et al., 1996). Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), is a program that offers a primary, secondary, and tertiary level of intervention. Once behavioral problems are identified, students receive services in one of the three categories. Interventions are specifically developed for each of those levels with the goal of reducing the risks for academic or social failure (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Less punitive and more proactive alternatives are suggested as strategies to diminish the impact of exclusionary discipline in the school-to-prison pipeline (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). Research conducted over the past 5 years focusing on the overrepresentation of African American males in exclusionary discipline ruled out explanations that appear unrelated to the phenomenon (i.e., socioeconomic differences and African American youth engage in more severe behaviors). Fenning and Rose (2007), as well as other researchers argued, to focus on school factors that contribute to the phenomenon, including discipline policies and procedures.

Similar to Herner (2011), Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest that embedding restorative culture in a school requires a multiyear investment of focus, time, and effort, and they detail a five-stage implementation model (see Table 3).

There are increasingly more schools throughout the United States investing in school-wide PBIS and a growing body of professionals advocating and providing technical assistance for—as well as investigating the effectiveness of—PBIS as it relates
Table 3

*Blood and Thorsborne: Stages of Implementation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Stage 1:** Gaining Commitment—*Capturing hearts and minds*** | 1. Making a case for change  
1.1. Identifying the need (the cost of current practice)  
1.2. Identifying learning gaps  
1.3. Challenging current practice  
1.4. Debunking the myths around behavior management and what makes a difference  
1.5. Linking to other priorities  
2. Establishing buy-in |
| **Stage 2:** Developing a Shared Vision—*Knowing where we are going and why*** | 1. Inspiring a shared vision  
2. Developing preferred outcomes aligned with the vision  
3. Building a Framework for Practice  
4. Developing a common language |
| **Stage 3:** Developing Responsive and Effective Practice—*Changing how we do things around here*** | 1. Developing a range of responses  
2. Training, maintenance and support  
3. Monitoring for quality standards |
| **Stage 4:** Developing a Whole School Approach—*Putting it all together*** | 1. Realignment of school policy with new practice  
2. Managing the Transition  
3. Widening the lens |
| **Stage 5:** Professional Relationships—*Walking the talk with each other*** | 1. Promoting open, honest, transparent and fair working relationships  
2. Using restorative processes for managing staff grievance, performance management and conflict  
3. Challenging practice and behavior-building integrity |

to behavior and school performance. According to its website, the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS, 2014) has been established by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices. In addition, networks are being created in multiple states to support the center’s work.

Nearly 8,000 schools in 47 states have adopted school-wide positive behavioral support systems. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports is a proactive research-based approach to preventing student behavioral problems and achieving social and learning goals. A study of Illinois schools in 2012 indicated that 35% of all public schools in the state that implemented PBIS strategies showed a remarkable decline in student misbehavior (Illinois PBIS Network, 2012). Of the 1,460 schools that implemented PBIS with fidelity, 1,139 demonstrated active assessments of their PBIS implementation and in all three tiers showed a significant decline in disciplinary behaviors. According to the report, middle schools that had fully implemented PBIS at tier 1 had a 19% lower out-of-school suspension rate, from 10.87 students per 100 to 8.74 students per 100 enrolled (Illinois PBIS Network, 2012). At the tier 2 level, schools experienced a 59% decrease in the number of students, with two to five Office Discipline Referrals during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. Other significant improvements included more students who had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) succeeding in general education settings (Illinois PBIS Network, 2012). In addition, Office Discipline Referrals declined, with 200 students receiving tier-3 interventions. In the 3 months prior to the implementation of the interventions, 194 of
the 200 students collectively received 800 office referrals. When assessed 6 to 8 months later, 99 of the 194 students had a decrease in office referrals, while 52 of the students who had previously received six or more referrals saw that number decrease to one or no referrals (Illinois PBIS Network, 2012).

As the number of discipline issues declined, test scores became higher. At Beulah Park Elementary School in Zion, IL during the 2 years after PBIS was implemented, the school’s ISAT scores rose from 70% of students meeting or exceeding state standards to 81% in 2010-2011 (Illinois PBIS Network, 2012). Studies in Arizona, Wisconsin, and many other of the 48 states that have implemented PBIS boast the same types of results (PBIS, 2014).

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Since its inception in the 1980s at the University of Oregon, PBIS has developed into a framework that can be used by any school to help improve the social and learning behaviors of students, while decreasing disruptions that interfere with instruction (Dunlap, Goodman, McEvoy, & Paris, 2010). Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports is now implemented in thousands of schools throughout the United States, including preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools. It is also being implemented in programs for students with severe emotional impairments and developmental disabilities, as well as in juvenile facilities (Dunlap et al., 2010).

Schools are discovering that PBIS:

- Addresses the behavioral needs of students, with proven, easy-to-implement strategies.
• Enables schools to create the right fit, so that practices are appropriate to the context and sustainable over time.
• Is doable and does not have to overwhelm staff, given the limited time and resources that schools generally experience.
• Is affordable.
• Helps create a positive climate.
• Results in increased time devoted to instruction and fewer disciplinary incidents.

School-wide PBIS is a proactive approach based on a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention aimed at creating safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on teaching and reinforcing important social skills and data-based problem to address existing behavioral concerns (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The core elements of PBIS are integrated within organizational systems in which teams, working with administrators and behavioral specialists, provide the training, policy support, and organizational supports needed for initial implementation, active application, and sustained use of the core elements (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Strong administrative support is essential to successful implementation of school-wide PBIS. Researchers have concluded that when a principal is not solidly behind school improvement plans, the process is likely to stumble and dissipate. Some staff may expend considerable energy initially but lose heart when the principal does not support the process at critical junctures (Colvin, 2007). Ideally, there should be district-level commitment of support to implementing PBIS. Schools that have implemented the program cite the following reasons for adopting it (Dunlap et al., 2010):
To decrease levels of disruptiveness, rates of office referrals, and suspensions.

To improve school climate, safety, and order.

To increase instructional time.

To increase administrative time for purposes other than to manage discipline problems.

To enhance the overall operation and performance of the school.

To more effectively partner with parents and the community.

Schools that have implemented PBIS with fidelity have benefitted from noticeable differences in student behavior. Terry Dangerfield (as cited in Dunlap et al., 2010), the principal of Keppen Elementary School in Lincoln Park, MI, wrote: “There is a real sense that staff members are discovering new ways to handle problems in their classrooms, the number of referrals is down, and students are communicating to each other in improved ways” (p. vi). Tim Podlewski (as cited in Dunlap et al., 2010), assistant principal of Patrick Henry Middle School in Woodhaven, MI, stated:

The impact of implementing PBIS on behaviors and the general tone at our middle school has been significant. Our school principal and I went from dealing with an average of 10.3 behavioral infractions resulting in suspension per day during the 2005-2006 school year down to an average of 3.8 per day this year. (p. vi)

In the past, school-wide discipline has focused mainly on reacting to specific student misbehavior by implementing punishment-based strategies, including reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004).
Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important part of a student’s educational experience. It is much more positive to teach behavioral expectations and then reward students for following them instead of waiting for misbehavior to occur and then responding. The purpose of school-wide PBIS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

In general, PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements of data for decision making, measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, practices showcasing evidence that those outcomes are achievable, and systems that efficiently and effectively support implementing those practices. Most students with significant behavioral difficulties also have academic problems. One primary indicator that schools use to gauge how well they are functioning is student performance on standardized achievement tests. Although there are many complex and interactive factors that account for student academic scores on such tests, emerging research suggests that one such factor is the problem behavior of a student (Scott, Nelson, & Liaupsin, 2002). Disruptive behavior typically results in lost instructional time and, thus, compromised learning. To counteract that loss, interventions that recover and maximize instructional time by keeping students in class should be applied to ensure improvements in academic areas. Horner, Sugai, Todd, and Lewis-Palmer’s (2005) report on preliminary descriptive data suggests a relationship between school-wide PBIS and changes in academic performance, noting the need for further analysis in this area.

Clearly, there are many factors that account for academic performance on standardized tests. Instructional strategies, student motivation, and student test-taking skills all play a role in academic outcomes (Lassen et al., 2006). It is argued that one such
factor is the amount of learning time that a student spends each day in the classroom. When that instructional time is reduced through referrals that lead to suspension or expulsion, it is probable to assume that academic progress will be compromised.

The research implies that school-wide PBIS is an effective intervention in reducing problematic student behavior in urban schools that have high rates of student misbehavior and that improvements can be sustained over long periods of time. Additionally, PBIS may have a significant impact on improving academic performance, primarily through increasing the amount of time students spend in their classrooms. Understanding how PBIS relates to academic performance is an important question that researchers must address more fully (Lassen et al., 2006).

Conclusions and Implications From the Literature

The organization of this review started with establishing a clear relationship between poor school performance and poor school options. Most sobering was the established predictable school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003) and its impact among African American males who do poorly in school. To understand and examine statistics and variables associated with this relationship, the literature review presented studies and statistics that established:

1. There is an achievement gap that places African American males at risk.
2. There is a relationship between school behavior and academic performance.
3. There are a disproportionately high number of African American males referred for disciplinary action, and those actions are disproportionately punitive.
After those statistics and relationships were reviewed and established, the remainder of the review presented factors that appear to relate to school performance:

1. The cultural competence of teachers and its influence on teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors.

2. The disciplinary approaches and choices available to schools and teachers, and the effectiveness and impact of those approaches.

This review establishes that the poor adult outcome realized by disproportionately high numbers of African American males relates to the disproportionately high number of African American males who experience a lack of school success. Further, that lack of school success involves a combination of both academic and behavioral problems. The fact that African American males are also disproportionately referred to and face punitive consequences raises questions regarding whether disciplinary practices may contribute to the cycle of failure those males face. Literature that suggested African American males may be punished more regularly and severely for similar infractions involving other groups further suggests that disciplinary practices might be one of the variables that are problematic. School disciplinary practices are contributing to the problems faced by African American males. Literature also suggested that teachers who are culturally competent are more prepared to fairly and effectively meet those students’ needs. Finally, there is literature that suggests alternatives to primarily punitive disciplinary approaches, and that literature has been empirically validated. Therefore, school-wide studies that further address teacher practices are warranted and should provide baseline data to assist schools in designing policies, procedures, and professional development plans that help increase teachers’ cultural competence and build school-wide approaches to discipline.
that focus on restoring and teaching behavior rather than on punishing students out of our schools. Those findings and that logic support the present investigation.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

The nuances of the application of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in an urban middle school setting were investigated. Impact of implementation was measured using qualitative interviews and observations, including the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), the Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Survey, and Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs).

The present study utilized a design experiment methodology. Design experiments are conducted to test interventions and theories. They blend both a pragmatic and a theoretical orientation that results in a series of test and revision. The design experiment makes it possible for the researcher to generate a theory and to survey key personnel who come into contact with students, including teachers, counselors, support staff, cafeteria workers, custodians, and campus security personnel of Watson Middle School.

Design experiments are pragmatic, as well as theoretical, in orientation. They have been conducted for a range of purposes, including school and school district restructuring experiments in which a research team collaborates with teachers, school administrators, students, and other stakeholders to support organizational change (Confrey, Bell, & Carrejo, 2001).

This chapter will present a detailed description of the research design, population and sample, data collection procedures, and rationale for data analysis methods. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What impact does implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports have on the school-wide disciplinary outcomes of an urban middle school?
a. What is the impact on African American male students?

b. What is the impact on the rest of the student body?

2. What are the teachers who implement PBIS with fidelity experiencing in their classrooms in regard to student behavior and academic achievement?

   a. What are their experiences with African American male students?

   b. What are their experiences with other groups of students?

3. What impact did the implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports plan have on the culture of Watson Middle School?

   Five crosscutting features differentiate the design experiment from other methodologies. First, the purpose of the design experiment is to develop a class of theories about the process of learning and the means to support that learning (Cobb et al., 2003). For this particular study, the effects that implementing school-wide PBIS had on student behavior were studied. The framework used to conceptualize the study was the School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Implementers’ Blueprint and Self-Assessment (Algozzine et al., 2002) developed by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Center on PBIS. Subsequent steps of the school-wide PBIS model include adopting and implementing interventions, monitoring both processes and outcomes of the plan, and modifying the plan on an as-needed basis (Turnbull et al., 2002).

   Consistent with design experiment, the second crosscutting feature of this study was highly interventionist (Cobb et al., 2003). The intent of this study was to investigate the possibilities for educational improvement in regard to all students, but particularly African American male students, and to identify positive behavioral supports that would
allow for African American male students to remain in the learning environment.

Through this feature of the design experiment, the researcher sought relevant factors that contributed to the emergence of the phenomena and became aware of their interrelations.

In sync with the design experiment approach, the third crosscutting feature carries forward the first two. Design experiments create conditions for developing theories. As the theories were developed, they were also tested, thus exposing them. Design experiments have two sides, prospective and reflective. On the prospective side, a hypothesis is developed. The hypothesis for this study was that introducing school-wide PBIS implementation would have significant effects on student behavior, thus reducing the levels of student discipline including Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs), which lead to exclusionary discipline consequences for African American male students. That hypothesis was studied by data gathered from surveys completed by teachers, support staff, counselors, custodians, cafeteria workers, and other key personnel that come into contact with the students at Watson Middle School, an urban school located in Southern California. Classroom observation and field notes, SET, EBS, and ODRs were used to collect data.

On the reflective side, design experiments are conjecture-driven tests. For this study, the teacher-student relationship as it relates to student behavior, success, and achievement in the classroom is thought to be true and has not been disproven. For example, conjectures about interactions between teachers and students and the results of those interactions may be tested; if the conjecture is refuted, alternative conjectures may be generated and tested (Cobb et al., 2003). Together, the prospective and reflective aspects of the design result in the fourth characteristic iterative design. Iterative design
occurs as the results of the prospective and the reflective aspects of the design experiment evolve. As conjectures are generated and refuted and new conjectures are generated and tested, cycles of interventions and revisions result. The intended outcome is an explanatory framework that specifies expectations that become the focus of investigation during the next cycle of inquiry (Cobb et al., 2003). In the present study, the researcher sought to determine whether the school-wide implementation of a program designed around positive interventions has effects on student behavior, specifically on the behavior of African American male students. If so, what are they?

The fifth feature of the methodology of this study revolved around theory. Theories developed during the process of experiment must do real work (Cobb et al., 2003). The critical question posed was whether the theory informs the prospective design, and if so, in what way?

In contrast to most research methodologies, design experiments have the potential for rapid payoff because they are filtered in advance for instrumental effect. They also link directly to the problems that practitioners address in the course of their work every day (Cobb et al., 2003). In terms of applying the methodology to Watson Middle School, the researcher sought to determine whether implementing PBIS would have an impact on student behavior. As compared with partial implementation, school-wide implementation may have mixed reactions. In this study, the introduction of certain interventions had better results than others. Using this methodology provided the researcher immediate feedback for the interventions that were well received, as well as for those that failed.
School and Study Participants

The school was selected based on the convenient access the researcher has as instructional leader and principal. Located in a densely populated urban neighborhood in Southern California, Watson Middle School provided education to 1,035 students at the time of this study. Of those, 18% were African American; there were 88 African American female students and 99 African American male students. As for the rest of the student body, 38% of the students were Hispanic, 35% were Filipino, and 4% were White. Seventy-five percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL).

All teachers currently employed at Watson Middle School were invited to participate in this study. In addition, all key personnel that come into contact with the students of Watson Middle School were also invited to participate. Key personnel for the purpose of this study included, counselors, librarian, school nurse, cafeteria workers, custodians, and campus security personnel (see Appendix A for Consent Form).

Two vice principals who have dealt with exclusionary discipline at Watson Middle School for a minimum of 3 years were also purposefully selected as participants.

Instruments and Procedures

As detailed in Table 4, the study was organized into three phases. A prescribed set of activities occurred in each phase (Todd, Sugai, & Horner, 2002). A schedule for data collection and instrumentation was also prescribed for each phase (Todd et al., 2002).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Activity/Procedures</th>
<th>Instrument/Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Meet with district personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Organize Office Disciplinary Data Review (ODR)</td>
<td>ODRs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Establish PBIS team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Schedule/attend district-provided PBIS training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Informal interviews with staff</td>
<td>Interview notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Field observations Administer School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET)</td>
<td>Field observation notes SET results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Self-Assessment Survey</td>
<td>EBS results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incoming sixth graders parent orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and establish a character development program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-Jun 09-10</td>
<td>Field observations Informal interviews with staff</td>
<td>Field observation notes Interview notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-Mar 2010</td>
<td>Establish PARR incentive/reward program Organize/Review Office Disciplinary Referral (ODR) Data</td>
<td>ODR sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Train new staff on PBIS strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2010</td>
<td>PBIS team develops PBIS activities Invite/incentivize family participation in PBIS activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III</td>
<td>PBIS team develops rules to determine when students should move to next tier of intervention</td>
<td>ODRs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Jun 2010</td>
<td>PBIS team develops a tracking system to record students with multiple ODRs</td>
<td>ODRs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Analyze multiple data sources to determine plans for next best steps</td>
<td>Attendance records, ODRs, grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4, instrumentation includes the Office Disciplinary Data Referral Review, interview notes, observation notes, the School-wide Evaluation Tool, and the Effective Behavior Support Survey. Table 5 provides more detail in regard to how, when, and to whom each instrument was administered. Each data collection procedure and instrument is described in greater detail below.

**Observations**

Classroom observations were ongoing for teachers who wrote high numbers of referrals each year and teachers who wrote very few, if any, referrals throughout the year. Each teacher was observed at least twice for approximately 55 minutes each session, which lasted the entire class period. The researcher focused on teacher-to-student interactions and relationships, student-to-student relationships, classroom environment, level of student engagement, teacher talk versus student talk, level of thinking required for various tasks, and academic language used by the teacher and students. The researcher also obtained teachers’ lesson plans prior to the observation sessions as supportive documentation of relevance, rigor, and cultural competency.

**School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET)**

Horner et al. (2004) suggested that the SET is an effective tool for (a) assessing the need for training, (b) assessing the impact of personnel development efforts in the area of school-wide PBIS, (c) assessing the sustained use of school-wide PBIS procedures, and (d) developing locally effective strategies for building PBIS outcomes. They found the instrument to have high levels of reliability (overall alpha of .96) and test-retest reliability (97.3% average agreement on items). Inter-observer agreement (99%), Construct validity (Pearson $r = .75, p \leq .01$), and sensitivity to change ($t = 7.63,$...


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase date</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Administration procedure</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Meeting notes</td>
<td>Meet with district personnel</td>
<td>Principal and district PBIS personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>ODR</td>
<td>Analyze and organize ODR forms</td>
<td>VPs, counselors, site tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Interview notes</td>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
<td>Admin team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Interview notes</td>
<td>Establish PBIS team</td>
<td>Admin team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 09</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Attend district PBIS</td>
<td>PBIS team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase II</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 09</td>
<td>ODR data</td>
<td>Town hall meeting with incoming 6th graders and their parents</td>
<td>Principal and VPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-Jun 09-10</td>
<td>Character development program</td>
<td>CCTV presentations</td>
<td>All Watson staff and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Jun 09-10</td>
<td>Field observation notes</td>
<td>Observe classrooms and collect notes</td>
<td>Principal and VPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-My 2010</td>
<td>Interview notes</td>
<td>Informal interviews (voluntary)</td>
<td>Principal and staff volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 2010</td>
<td>EBS</td>
<td>Administer EBS self-assessment survey</td>
<td>All staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase III</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-Mar</td>
<td>ODR</td>
<td>Establish PARR incentive awards</td>
<td>PBIS team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2010</td>
<td>ODR</td>
<td>develop PBIS activities</td>
<td>PBIS team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2010</td>
<td>PARR Awards</td>
<td>Invitation to family members to participate in PBIS activities</td>
<td>PBIS team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10-present</td>
<td>School-wide discipline procedures</td>
<td>Quarterly professional development</td>
<td>Principal, VPs, PBIS team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
$df = 12, p \leq .001$). The SET is an instrument to measure integrity of school-wide PBIS implementation efforts. It was created to provide a rigorous measure of primary prevention practices within school-wide behavioral support. The SET is a valid, reliable measure. In this study, the SET will be used to analyze the relationship between the implementation of school-wide PBIS and changes in social and academic outcomes. All staff will complete a pre- and poststudy School-wide Evaluation Tool (see Appendix B).

**Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Survey**

The EBS Survey is used by school staff for initial and annual assessment of effective behavioral support systems in the school. It examines the status and need for improvement of four behavioral support systems: (a) school-wide discipline systems, (b) classroom management systems, (c) nonclassroom management systems (e.g., cafeteria, hallway, and playground), and (d) systems for individual students engaging in chronic problem behaviors. Each question in the survey relates to one of the four systems. Survey results are summarized and used for a variety of purposes including:

1. Annual action planning.
2. Internal decision making.
3. Assessment of change over time.
4. Awareness building of staff.
5. Team validation.

The survey summary was used to develop an action plan for implementing and sustaining effective behavioral support systems throughout the school. Initially, the entire staff completed the EBS survey at the beginning and end of the 2012-2013 school year. The survey took 20-30 minutes to complete (see Appendix C).
Office Disciplinary Referral (ODR) Data

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports requires careful analysis of the school’s data on disciplinary action, before and after phases of intervention. Disciplinary referral data were collected for 4 school years, which spanned from the fall of 2009 through the spring of 2013. The disciplinary data were collected and entered into a computer system by school staff. The discipline referral process was guided by the district-wide code of conduct. The person completing the referral provided a narrative of the behavior. The same staff responsible for data entry was consistent all 3 years (e.g., vice principals, counselors, and secretary).

It is important to understand the discipline procedures that were in effect prior to this study in order to better understand the collection and review of ODRs. The discipline process was guided by the Watson Middle School discipline policy and procedures guide, which is in line with the district-wide code of conduct. The behaviors were coded in categories ranging in number from one to 5. All infractions that were coded as 1 were considered minor infractions. Infractions coded as 2 or above were considered to be major infractions. The person completing the referral wrote a brief description of the behavior. Six staffers, including two vice principals, two counselors, and one secretary, shared the responsibility of entering the data into the computer during the past 4 years. Statistical inferences about African American students and special education students, along with the total number of referrals, were used in this study. As the study progressed, office procedures for documenting referrals became more standardized.

The researcher conducted spot-checks of data input on a regular basis throughout each phase of the study. There was no predetermined set pattern as to when and what
number of referrals would be spot-checked for timeliness of entry and accuracy; all spot-checks were completely random. Spot-checks were performed to determine the following:

1. Were the data entered into the computer consistent with the information on the hard copy?
2. Were the data entered in a timely manner?
3. Were the data entered in sync with school and district codes of discipline?

**Data Analysis**

A constant comparative method (Creswell, 2008) was used to analyze collected data on an ongoing basis throughout the completion of the design experiment. In this study, data collected on the pre- and post-SET and EBS were compared. Office Disciplinary Referrals were compared and analyzed. Conclusions were drawn from the findings of the data analysis.
CHAPTER 4—RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This study took place in an urban middle school in Southern California. For the purposes of this study, the school is being referred to as Watson Middle School. The researcher, who was also the school principal, conducted a thorough review of the school’s disciplinary data. Based on that review, he determined that the number of referrals for suspensions and expulsions were higher than district averages and expectations. The fact that there were a disproportionately high number of African Americans, especially males, referred was a particularly disturbing outcome of the review. The review of literature on this subject led to hypothesizing some root issues and highlighted some promising practices. The root issues included concerns about the cultural competence of the staff and a school climate that overly focused on a disciplinary model based on response consequences. Among the positive, promising practices were school cultures being developed to more proactively reduce aberrant behavior and to help ensure that responses to aberrant behavior would be more restorative and less punitive. The literature regularly cites and affirms Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for a cultural shift of this nature.

The overarching issues and the literature review resulted in the decisions to: (a) introduce and implement a school-wide PBIS model, and (b) study the impact of the PBIS model as described by Todd et al. (2002). Implementing a school-wide PBIS model was accomplished in a series of three prescribed phases, and data collection was completed in each phase (Todd et al., 2002). Each of those phases not only supported planning and engaging in a logical sequence of intervention activities but also led to systematic phased intervention and the systematic collection, organization, and movement
of data. As such, the PBIS protocol followed by the school facilitated every aspect of this study. The implementation of activities and results from this school-wide PBIS initiative have been organized by phase and are presented in the section that follows.

**Preintervention**

As both a baseline and confirmation of need for intervention, Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) were reviewed. The review yielded 1,360 disciplinary referrals that were made during the 2009-2010 school year. The ODRs were also reviewed prior to implementing the PBIS program to establish both a baseline and an understanding of whether there were a disproportionately high number of those referrals written for African American students, particularly African American male students.

Specific data collected for African American male students was disaggregated from the overall school referral data. Of the 1,360 referrals in the 2009-2010 school year, 900—or 66%—were written for African American males. Just 9% of the student population of Watson Middle School was African American males. Therefore, based on the ODR review, African American males had a disproportionately high number of referrals written for them.

In summary, the ODRs collected prior to implementing the PBIS intervention provided baseline data as to the number of annual referrals written overall at Watson Middle School, as well as the number written for African American males. Those numbers were important baseline measures that were subsequently used to evaluate the impact of PBIS intervention in of the study’s three phases. The baseline data also reinforced the principal/researcher’s concern that the ODR rate was unacceptably high
and the hypothesis that the referrals were disproportionately high for African American males.

The most significant change in the proportion of students receiving referrals was between the baseline year and year 1. The number of African American male students receiving referrals between the baseline year and year 1 also decreased significantly. Years 2 and 3 following implementation also produced fewer ODRs written for African American males. That outcome may be attributed in part to the reduction in the total number of ODRs written overall. The overall number of African American male students receiving referrals for behavioral issues between years 2 and 3 was again lower than that of the previous year. The researcher surmised that the reduction in the number of ODRs coincided with the gradual implementation of PBIS. Many of the ODRs written in years 2 and 3 were multiple referrals written for the same student(s).

The data indicated that despite our best efforts in building positive relationships and implementing PBIS interventions with students, in February, March, April, and May of each year inappropriate behaviors surfaced that caused teachers to write more referrals. Other factors that should be considered include the mind-set of teachers as the California Standardized Tests loomed, the seasons changed, and the end of the school year approached. It should also be mentioned that school-wide implementation of PBIS strategies remained incomplete. The four teachers who wrote the most referrals in the 2012-2013 school year did not see the high number of referrals written as their problem. None of those teacher believed they shared responsibility with the students for the students’ problematic behavior. During an interview with the researcher/principal, none
of those staff members assumed any ownership of the students’ behavior. The following list highlights suggested solutions and consequences to address inappropriate behavior:

1. Create a separate room for chronic distractions.
   a. Students are put on probation.
   b. Temporary classrooms are specified for a period of time.

2. Use data pertaining to number of referrals per student during current year. Students who have received a predetermined number of referrals should be assigned to a special advisory class that has a strong teacher or rotating counselors or administrators to advise how to behave appropriately. Those staffers will also positively encourage students to complete assignments and become leaders.

3. Use Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) to clarify expectations for all students, as well as school-wide consequences for inappropriate behavior.

4. Begin tardy sweeps early in the school year and continue them throughout the year. Students who are chronically tardy will receive a contract that details clear consequences. Students will receive a pass to return to class, and the office will keep a record of all students who were involved in the sweep.

5. A prereferral system will apply, detailing guidelines for teachers to send disruptive students to the office so other students can learn. Suspension from class may be the recommendation; no formal referral is needed for that outcome.
Implementation Details

The following sections explain the implementation details of Phases I, II and III.

Phase I of the Study

The review of office disciplinary data suggested the school did have a disproportionately high number and distribution of suspensions and expulsions. In particular, during the spring of the 2009-2010 school year, district administration noticed an extremely large number of students of color, particularly African American males, had been suspended in disproportionately high numbers compared with their White counterparts. High numbers of suspensions were also true for Hispanic or Latino males. It was apparent to the school administration that there were too many referrals and disciplinary actions, as well as which students were most likely to receive them at Watson Middle School. Subsequently, the school’s principal contacted a member of the dropout and prevention program to schedule an initial meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the district’s concerns with the overrepresentation of African American students, particularly African American male students, being excluded from school because of disciplinary practices. The option of implementing PBIS school-wide was discussed, and the implementation process was reviewed. During the meeting a two-part plan was developed that included: (a) identifying, and (b) organizing a data collection system, as well as a PBIS team. The first step was to involve staff members in the discussion in order to create the PBIS team. The district offered training in PBIS, and the members of Watson Middle School’s newly founded PBIS team participated in the training in the spring of the 2010-2011 school year.
The Effective Behavior Support (EBS) Survey developed by Todd et al. (2002) was administered to teachers at Watson Middle School during the spring of 2012. The EBS survey was designed to determine the level of implementation and priority for change in four different areas: school-wide, classroom, nonclassroom and individual supports. The instrument was completed by 85.3% certificated and 14.7% classified members of the school’s staff. The surveys were administered electronically, with instructions to complete and submit them by a specified date. District personnel from the Office of Dropout Prevention scored the surveys. The results were first shared with the administrative staff and then the entire Watson Middle School staff. The results were presented to the school staff at a professional development meeting in the spring of 2013. The data were used to determine priorities for action planning in the following school year. The PBIS team members revised the survey before implementation to ensure it would better meet the needs of Watson Middle School. Subsequent steps of the school-wide PBIS model included adopting and implementing interventions, monitoring the process and outcomes, and modifying the plan on an as-needed basis.

Phase I also included unstructured and informal interviews, as well as field observations in the classrooms. Field notes about the climate that characterized the interventions and discipline implementation within the school were also collected. Observation feedback was in a timely manner at staff meetings to strengthen the credibility of the study and research. The initial report of overall themes was presented to the whole staff at a fall professional development meeting. During the meeting, additional information about PBIS was provided. All questions, issues, and/or concerns were addressed. A brief explanation of how PBIS would address the concerns of all
stakeholders was also presented. The researcher and administrative team were provided with examples of how the implementation of the PBIS strategies would address school and district concerns about the overrepresentation of African American and particularly African American male students being excluded from school. Examples were provided to highlight how to connect the supports to school improvement planning. The EBS survey was an initial assessment of how effective our behavior support system was in our school. The survey identified the status and need for improvement of the four behavior support systems:

- School-wide discipline systems.
- Nonclassroom management systems.
- Classroom Management systems.
- Systems for individual students engaging in chronic problem behaviors.

The EBS provided data for the school at a pre-PBIS implementation level.

Although the school was not ready for the full implementation of the PBIS strategies, the staff fully supported the implementation of the STOIC model. The STOIC variables are as follow:

Structure/organize the classroom for success.
Teach students how to behave responsibly in the classroom.
Observe student behavior (supervise).
Interact positively with students.
Correct irresponsible behavior fluently, that is, in a manner that does not interrupt the flow of instruction.
Stoic is an adjective meaning tending to remain unemotional, especially showing admirable patience and endurance in the face of adversity. The five variables of STOIC are practiced to guide students toward the goal of respectful, responsible, motivated behavior. During the summer of 2012, the PBIS team met on three separate occasions to develop an action plan for implementing the agreed-upon STOIC model. Planning included an overview of PBIS, reviewing the school-wide data, revising the school-wide discipline policy, and developing a school-wide acknowledgment system. The team was provided with an overview of the PBIS structure and intervention strategies. Outcomes of the meetings included a proposed acknowledgment system. Students displaying Positive attitudes, Active learning, Respect of self, others, and our school, and also being Responsible for their own choices were on PARR. Students who were deemed on PARR would earn raffle tickets and would be eligible for weekly school-wide drawings to win small prizes such as Kudo bars, Gatorade, head of lunch line privileges. The meetings also resulted in an initial draft of the revised school-wide discipline policy, which included definitions of major and minor infractions. Additional outcomes included a vision statement for the PBIS team and sample questions and scenarios for the whole staff, which was to be presented during the overview and rollout meeting for all teachers upon their return to school in late August.

The team prepared and presented the results of the summer sessions to the entire staff, including teachers, custodians, campus security personnel, and office and support staff. The overview briefly highlighted the PBIS structure, a summary of the EBS survey, the draft of the discipline policy, and an evaluation tool for providing feedback. Following a short question-and-answer period and the reassurance that PBIS would not
be used as an evaluative tool, the staff unanimously agreed to adopt and implement the plan in the upcoming 2012-2013 school year. Subsequent to those activities, the school principal chose to study the issue, process, and effectiveness. In addition, he proposed this case as his dissertation topic and, as a result, also became the lead researcher of this study.

The newly formed PBIS team was introduced to the certificated staff on August 30, 2012. The agenda included:

- Disciplinary data being presented as a means to support the rationale as to why this approach would address building and district concerns.
- An explanation of what was expected to be implemented at Watson Middle School.
- A discussion of who would be involved and how the implementation would take place.
- A process for providing feedback.
- Ongoing professional development to be provided by district personnel as well as the PBIS team.

The presentation was provided to the whole staff in one setting. A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. It was suggested that the school invest in a character development program to be taught in advisory classes throughout the year. Beginning in August 2012 and continuing throughout the 2012-2013 school year, the PBIS team met monthly to evaluate the program and its implementation, review monthly disciplinary data, and discuss the best-possible next steps. A suggestion was made to compile and publish the total numbers of ODRs written by individual teachers. The
suggestion was declined because of confidentiality issues. It was decided instead, by way of a compromise, that administrators would collect the data in the best manner to ensure that the information would be used to drive individual conversations with those teachers who wrote the most referrals.

Early in September 2012 grade-level town hall meetings were held in the school’s auditorium. The school principal facilitated the meetings along with the grade-level vice principal, grade-level counselor, and one PBIS team. Each session had an agenda that included: (a) an overview of expectations, including expectations that pertained to behavior during passing period, as well as in locker rooms and restrooms, and (b) expectations in terms of respectful and responsible behavior, including transitioning to and from school and the newly developed acknowledgment system through which students would be recognized publically for demonstrating positive behaviors.

Volunteers were called on to give examples of responsible behaviors in all areas throughout the campus. At the end of each town hall meeting, students who were deemed as being on PARR were rewarded with a raffle ticket as they exited the auditorium. Each assembly lasted approximately 30 minutes, after which the students were released back to their teachers. The structure made it possible for the facilitators to observe students’ behavior in the hallways immediately after presenting their expectations of hallway behavior.

During the weekly CCTV broadcast, the names of three students were announced over the air for being on PARR. Those students were advised to proceed to the Associated Student Body room during their lunch period to receive a free chocolate-granola Kudos bar. Every adult in the school had input on the PARR awards, including
the cafeteria and custodial staffs, as well as office and security personnel. The purpose was to acknowledge students doing the right thing anywhere on campus, not only in the classroom. The PBIS team also organized two major school-wide celebrations each school year. Those events were typically a dance coinciding with a holiday; for example, before the winter break and another timed around Valentine’s Day. Criteria for attending a school-wide celebration linked more to each student’s citizenship grade, with less emphasis on his or her academic grades. Future school-wide celebrations were contingent on fewer office referrals school-wide and more instructional time spent in the classroom. During the previous few years, the administration had noticed a significant spike in office referrals during April. The PBIS team determined that future school-wide celebrations should include an event to be held in May, contingent on a 25% reduction in office referrals in April, as compared to those issued in April the previous year.

Ongoing monitoring of and modifications to the school-wide PBIS continued throughout the school year. Small rewards such as free dress days were awarded as students began to reach milestones of predetermined numbers of fewer ODRs than the same month of the previous year. Office referral data were monitored on a monthly basis. Reports detailing ODRs were presented quarterly in all-staff meetings. Monthly reports summarizing student disciplinary statistics were presented to the school administrative team, and action plans were developed based on the data. Referrals and suspensions data was disaggregated for African American males and special education students. Those reports were also shared during quarterly staff meetings. The format for those meetings usually included quantitative and qualitative data, including collected ODRs, ongoing interviews with staff and students that detailed areas of strength in the PBIS program and
areas of concern, best-possible next steps, and an opportunity to provide anonymous written feedback.

The results from the initial phase included interviews and field notes. The results were coded into two categories, superordinate and subordinate. At least three pieces of evidence were required to support a result’s inclusion in any category. Results and themes that did not meet that requirement were considered interesting and informative but have not been included in this assessment. As a result of the data collection and review, three major themes were identified by the PBIS team:

- The need for clear and consistent expectations for students.
- The need for improved response time from the discipline office.
- The need/desire to focus on positive behaviors rather than constantly correcting inappropriate behaviors.

During Phase I, less time was spent on the implementation of school-wide PBIS than in the next two phases. Staff personnel spent an average of 2 to 3 hours per week practicing and implementing PBIS strategies. The majority of the staff identified PBIS as “something else added to their already crowded plate.” The mind-set of “this too shall pass” was clearly evident among some members of the staff. After multiple staff presentations and professional development sessions that provided examples showing how the supports tied into student behavior and school improvement, the staff came to a consensus about “trying on” the STOIC strategies as detailed previously.

**Phase II of the Study**

Full implementation of school-wide PBIS was not supported by the entire staff. The researcher continued collecting important quantitative data that linked specifically to
African American male students, including that pertaining to ODRs and the EBS self-assessment survey, attendance, and academic achievement.

The EBS survey was used as a measure of the staff’s perception pertaining to the school-wide supports that were in place. It was also used to identify and prioritize needs for the future. The survey provided a measure of the perceived levels and priorities around implementing PBIS. It is important to note that as a measurement tool, the survey reflected the staff’s perceptions of school-wide PBIS at a particular moment in time. It was made clear to all members of the staff that participation in the survey was completely anonymous. They were not asked any questions that would make them individually identifiable. Categories in the EBS included:

1. Student safety.
2. Student interactions with each other.
3. Staff interactions with each other.
5. Students feelings toward the school in general.
6. Parent/family perceptions of the school.
7. Staff interactions with students.
8. Issues that may represent problems at the school.

A series of questions listed within each category required responses of either “I agree” or “I disagree.” The PBIS team determined that, for subsequent years, a response of “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure” should be added among the options to increase the accuracy of the responses. The survey was administered online and took approximately 30 minutes to complete.
The EBS survey was completed by 85.3% of certificated staff (48) and 14.7% of the classified staff (11); all of the staff completing the survey were permanent employees of the district. Some areas of interest or concern follow.

**Student safety.** Highlights include:

- 83% of the staff said that students feel unsafe in the locker rooms.
- 66% of the staff said that students feel unsafe in the restrooms.
- 55% of the staff said that students were unlikely to tell an adult if they knew that another student was involved in something illegal or dangerous to himself or herself or to someone else.

**Student interaction.** Highlights include:

- 75% of the staff said that students do not treat each other with respect in the cafeteria.
- 73% said that students do not treat each other with respect in the hallways.
- 89% said that students do not treat each other with respect in the locker rooms.
- 66% said that students do not treat each other with respect on the buses

**Student/staff interactions.** Highlights include:

- 68% of the staff said that students do not treat them with respect, while 85% of the staff said that staff members are friendly and helpful to students.
- 86% said that the staff is supportive of students.
- 80% said that the staff treats students fairly.
- 91% said that the staff treats students respectfully.
- 94% said that staff members encourage students to do their best.
• 73% said that staff members let students know when they are behaving appropriately.

• 71% said that students know they can come to them for help if they have problems they cannot solve on their own.

Communication of rules and expectations. Highlights include:

• 85% of the staff said that students are taught the rules for behavior in the classroom.

• 60% said that students are taught the rules and expectations of the hallways, locker rooms, and cafeteria.

• 53% said that students are not taught the rules for appropriate behavior in the restrooms.

• 64% said that students are taught the rules for behavior on the bus or walking to and from school.

• 76% said that parents/families are informed about the rules and expectations for student behavior at this school.

Students’ feelings toward school in general. Highlights include:

• 84% of the staff said that students are happy to come to school most of the time.

• 62% said that students believe that the work they do at school is important.

• 54% said that students are not proud to be part of the school.

Parents’/families’ perception of the school and staff. Highlights include:

• 85% of the staff said that parents/families who visit the school are welcomed, treated with respect, and encouraged to come back.
• 94% said that the school/staff does a good job of providing help when parents/families ask or need it.

• 51% said that the school/staff does a good job communicating with parents/families.

• 73% said that if parents/families had concerns about their student or about the school, they would feel comfortable discussing the situation with a staff member.

Staff interactions with each other. Highlights include:

• 58% of the staff said that staff members do not do a good job communicating with each other.

• 79% said that staff members treat each other with respect.

• 76% said that the school does not have a consistent approach to behavior management and discipline.

• 51% said that the school has adequate systems for identifying students who are at risk of falling through the cracks academically or behaviorally.

• 53% said that they receive sufficient support when they have to deal with difficult students or discipline problems.

• 78% said that they have a clear understanding of when and how they are expected to monitor student behavior.

• 84% said that they have a clear understanding of when and how they are expected to motivate/encourage to do their best.

• 75% said that they have a clear understanding of how they are expected to respond to student misbehavior.
Issues that may represent problems at the school. Highlights include:

- 85% of the staff said that inappropriate student language is a problem.
- 64% said that drug/alcohol/tobacco use by students is a problem.
- 77% said that theft or damage of school property by students is a problem.
- 79% said that student cliques are a problem.
- 88% said that students bullying other students is a problem.
- 91% said that students picking on or harassing other students is a problem.

The remainder of the survey consisted of short answers. The entire survey is included in Appendix C. The results of the EBS survey were based on certificated and classified staff perceptions.

Although full implementation of school-wide PBIS in the form of teaching and acknowledging behaviors had not been reached, the staff recognized the need for a change in the way discipline was handled at the school. The results of the survey and the data collected from ODRs for the previous 2 years had made that clear. Staff buy-in was critical to PBIS implementation. Participants involved in the early stages noted a gradual decrease in the number of office referrals linking involving behavioral issues. The principal supported buy-in by ensuring that he fulfilled his responsibilities, analyzed and communicated the results of the data, and gathered and listened to feedback from the staff.

As a result of staff feedback, the school had implemented several steps to ensure that all stakeholders would learn about PBIS prior to or at the beginning of each school year. Incoming sixth graders and their parents are introduced to PBIS during the orientation session held prior to the start of a new school year. Parents are further
familiarized with PBIS through handbooks, newsletters, townhall meetings, and other forms of communication. School staff (certified and classified) review data collected from the EBS survey during their August institute days. All students learn how the PBIS system pertains to them during the first 3 days of school in CCTV presentations by the school administration. Specifically, behavioral expectations are addressed regarding each area of the school, including classroom behavior that involves visiting teachers or substitutes. The school-wide expectations are the core of the PBIS implementation. Positive behavior is reviewed throughout the year, especially in the areas where administrators see the most instances of inappropriate behavior.

At the PBIS team’s first meeting, the need for a character development program was identified by some staff members. In response to that suggestion, a program was implemented with advisory classes held 2 days each week. PowerPoint presentations were created for each of six positive character traits. The staff had also suggested identifying students who stood out for being on PARR (Prepared, Attentive, Respectful, and Responsible) in any given week, with the goal of recognizing those students publically in a timely manner. In addition to those strategies, the administration addresses an area of concern each month on CCTV. To identify an area of concern, the administrators and the PBIS team reviews the Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) data. The PBIS team also reviewed teacher feedback regarding behavioral concerns.

In addition, the staff had suggested an implementation of quarterly all-school celebrations when students met a school-wide behavioral goal. The goal would address the number of ODRs in a quarter. The PBIS team will set the goal number based on data from the previous school year. School-wide celebrations would take place on minimum
days to minimize the loss of instructional time. Most participants in the survey stated that they were satisfied with the implementation of a school-wide PBIS program. They also indicated that they had a basic understanding of school-wide PBIS. However, those who did not have an opportunity to learn the basics of the school’s PBIS plan prior to implementation experienced initial confusion. After a few months of working with the system, those confused participants were brought up to speed by the administrator’s onsite, as well as the district’s trainer, who led professional development sessions at the school.

In addition to the EBS surveys, ODRs data were collected, organized, and reviewed by the principal, vice principals, and the PBIS team. The ODRs were separated into five categories. Two categories included minor infractions, and three included major infractions. The ODRs were also separated by subgroups including African American males and special education students. When a student reported to the office with a written referral, the two counselors determined whether the infraction was minor or major and then handled the infraction accordingly. Minor infractions such as classroom disruptions or minor defiance were handled by the counselors themselves. Major infractions such as inappropriate language towards the teacher or classmate, fighting, and so forth, were handled by one of the two administrators. The PBIS team and the administrators assessed the discipline data for students overall. The researcher of this study assessed the discipline data for African American students, particularly African American male students. A spreadsheet of the total number of referrals per month was generated and populated with other data that had been collected over the past 4 years. In addition, the number of out-of-school suspensions resulting from ODRs was also
collected and charted on the same spreadsheet. The data collected over a 4-year span included 1 year of ODRs and suspension data for African American male students prior to the introduction and implementation of PBIS and 3 years of the same data post implementation of PBIS.

The data from the ODRs, as well as the EBS surveys, were shared with the entire staff. As a result, the staff seemed to gain an understanding of the concerns of the principal and the district about the disproportionately high number of ODRs and the subsequent exclusion from school of African American male students. Although most of the staff embraced the need for school-wide implementation of PBIS, there was not yet complete buy-in from all staff members. Focused presentations were made to small groups of staff members who had not embraced the need to change their practices of writing disciplinary referrals and thereby excluding students from their classes. With the full support of administration, some participants in the small group presentations agreed to try new interventions.

**Phase III of the Study**

During phase III there was a noticeable change in the school’s climate. Students, staff, and parents agreed that the culture of the school was beginning to change. Fewer referrals were being written, and student behaviors were clearly addressed. There was an emphasis on expectations for students and rules that applied beyond the classroom. The PBIS team and administrators met in the early spring of 2013 to capitalize on the momentum that had been gained during Phase II of the school-wide PBIS implementation plan. During that meeting, a trend clearly emerged: the discipline data collected over the previous 3 years indicated a sharp rise in inappropriate behaviors that occurred in
conjunction with the annual spring break. Convening for that meeting at that particular time proved to be the key in terms of sustaining the positive interventions that were newly in place on the campus and in the classrooms. The agenda for the meeting included:

(a) reviewing school-wide data (e.g., EBS, ODRs, etc.), (b) overview of the PBIS program, (c) developing a common discipline policy, (d) developing school-wide expectations and plans for teaching the expectations, and (e) developing a school-wide rewards system and making it equitable for all students. Table 6 details the three tiers of PBIS interventions in Phase III and the responsibilities within each tier.

Table 6

Phase III Tiers and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1, Phase III</th>
<th>Tier 2, Phase III</th>
<th>Tier 3, Phase III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Train new staff on PBIS yearly</td>
<td>o Team develops rules to determine when students should be moved to secondary tier of interventions</td>
<td>o Team develops individual support plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Demographic proportionality data assessed to define next steps and celebrations</td>
<td>o Team develops a tracking tool used to record students with multiple ODRs</td>
<td>o Develop rules to determine when students should be moved to tertiary tier of interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Team develops PBIS activities</td>
<td>o Develop plans to ensure successful student transition for student supports</td>
<td>o Analyze multiple data sources (attendance, ODRs, grades, etc.) to determine plans for monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Families participate in PBIS activities monthly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first year of ODR data collection served as the baseline for the next 3 years.

Table 7 provides data on the total number of disciplinary referrals in the baseline year (2009-2010), as well as in years 1, 2, and 3 of PBIS program implementation. The data are presented as monthly totals and annual totals. As detailed in Table 7, monthly and annual drops in the total number of ODRs and resulting disciplinary actions. It is worthy
Table 7

*Total Number of ODRs by Month and School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To note that there was a reduction in total ODRs from the baseline year to the end of the 36 months of implementation from 1,360 to 695.

Table 8 details changes in the number of ODRs issued to African American males. As shown in the table, the total number of ODRs also dropped from 444 to 256 among the African males subgroup. However, in 2009-2010 African American males represented 32.6% of the total school population, and in 2013-2014 that percentage grew to 36.8%. As a result, even though the total number of ODRs dropped, African American males were overrepresented by 18.67% in 2009-2010 and continued to be overrepresented by 18.61% in 2013-2014.
Table 8

*Total Number of African American Males Receiving ODRs by Month and Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the data show that the number of referrals decreased gradually over the 3 years following the baseline year, further analyses of ODR data indicate that teachers who wrote the fewest referrals in 2009-2010 continued to write few if any referrals in the school years that followed, while teachers who wrote the most referrals that first school year continued to write most in subsequent school years. In fact, of 631 ODRs written by the 48 certificated teachers at Watson Middle School in the 2012-2013 school year, 189 were written by four veteran teachers and 288 were written by seven teachers. The remaining 37 teachers wrote 154 referrals, bringing the certificated staff total to 631. Administrators, counselors, Para-educators, and office staffers wrote 64 ODRs, raising the total for the 2013-2013 school year to 695.
The ODR data from years 2 to 4 are provided as an indicator of PBIS being implemented at various levels throughout those years. Each year the overall number of referrals written was reduced, as more of the staff embraced implementing the strategies with some level of fidelity. Teachers handled most of the minor infractions that happened in their classrooms. Professional development for classroom management was a by-product of the implementation.

The greatest reduction of ODRs came between years 2 and 3. Identifying the problem and making the staff aware of it seemed to have an immediate impact on the way teachers managed their classrooms, handled minor to medium-level behavioral infractions, and began building relations with the students. Reductions in ODRs were noted in at least 7 of the 10 months of the school year. Seven of the 10 months showed at least a slight reduction in ODRs from the same month of the previous year. A noticeable spike in the number of ODRs occurred from February through May each year. A possible explanation for the overall reduction of ODRs was the administrator’s spot-checks of the actual written referrals. A series of interventions are listed as a guide for the classroom teacher to use before an ODR was written. Spot-checks were made of follow-up phone calls to parents if that intervention had been checked; the same approach applied for observing students’ seat assignments were observed during walk-through observations and for verifying teacher-student conferences. The school Evaluation Tool (SET) was given to the staff in October of year 3 of implementation. The SET is a series of questions designed to assess the PBIS features that are in place and to design and revise procedures as needed. Table 9 summarizes questions and staff responses. Of 48 teachers, 35 responded to all questions.
Table 9

**School Evaluation Tool (SET) Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the school rules?</th>
<th>Have you taught the school rules/behavior expectations this year?</th>
<th>Have you given out any referrals since October?</th>
<th>What types of student problems would you refer to the office?</th>
<th>What is the procedure for dealing with a stranger with a gun?</th>
<th>Is there a PBIS team to address school-wide behavior support systems?</th>
<th>Are you on the team?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-yes</td>
<td>41-yes</td>
<td>9-dna</td>
<td>13-disruption</td>
<td>Follow lockdown procedures</td>
<td>39-yes</td>
<td>7-yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-no</td>
<td>3-no</td>
<td>15-yes</td>
<td>41-defiance</td>
<td>5-not sure</td>
<td>5-yes</td>
<td>37-no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the documented crisis plan readily available?</td>
<td>Front Office</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Other/Gym</td>
<td>Hallways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-yes</td>
<td>44-yes</td>
<td>5-dna</td>
<td>39-don’t know</td>
<td>39-yes</td>
<td>5-did not know</td>
<td>44-no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-don't know</td>
<td>0-no</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-did not know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The *dna* notations indicate “did not answer.”
It was previously noted that four teachers wrote one-third of the office referrals during the third year of implementation. Two of those four teachers retired after the 2012-2013 school year, and one of the seven most frequent referral writers transferred to another site. Seven new teachers taught at Watson Middle School during years 2 and 3 of PBIS implementation.
CHAPTER 5—CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 4 provided a discussion of activities, findings, and results as they occurred over the three implementation phases. Results suggest that the three-phase school-wide implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program did contribute to cultural changes in the school, and those changes were evidenced by substantial drops in the number of disciplinary referrals for the entire student body, as well as for African American male students. Specifically, as detailed in Table 7, referrals dropped school-wide from 1,360 to 695. In addition, as detailed in Table 8, ODRs for African American males were reduced from 444 to 256. However, African American males still received a disproportionately high number of those referrals. Less than 10% of the students in the school are African American males, but more than 30% of the referrals are attributed to this subgroup. Clearly, progress has been made, but substantive issues remain. In this chapter, results will be reanalyzed by using the study’s three overarching research questions to review the present, and discuss the findings. Data collected in each of the three phases of the project were used to address the questions that follow. These three research questions were posed to further study and for use in evaluating the program’s impact.

1. What impact does the implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports have on the school-wide disciplinary outcomes of an urban middle school?
   a. What is the impact on African American male students?
   b. What is the impact on the rest of the student body?
2. What are teachers who implement PBIS with fidelity experiencing in their classrooms in regard to student behavior and academic achievement?
   a. What are the experiences with African American male students?
   b. What are the experiences with the rest of the students?

3. What impact did the implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports plan have on the school culture of the middle school?

**Research Question One**

*What impact does the implementation of school-wide Positive Interventions and Supports PBIS have on the school-wide disciplinary outcomes of an urban middle school?*

During the past 10 years, many urban schools have begun to address behavioral problems by implementing school-wide applications of PBIS. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, urban, inner-city schools face challenges that may not be present at rural or suburban schools. Increased rates of crime, poverty, violence, and unemployment are among those challenges. Increased problem behavior among students is also a critical factor in urban schools. Comparison of the percentages of students with problem behavior in “typical” suburban middle schools (Sugai & Horner, 2002), with those from several urban middle schools (Warren et al., 2003) indicated that not only were the challenges more frequent in urban middle schools but also that the behaviors were often more severe. The collection and analysis of Office Referral Data began in the 2009-2010 school year at Watson Middle School. The data were collected because the site principal realized that an inordinate amount of time was spent in the office handling disciplinary
issues. More than 1,300 office disciplinary referrals were written in one school year. More than 400 were written for African American male students. African American students made up approximately 18% of the student population. Filipino, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic students made up over 65% of the student population. As evidenced by the research, teachers wrote more referrals for African American students than for either of the ethnic groups having almost twice the number of students. Referrals were written for minor offenses at a much higher rate for African American males than any other student group or subgroup in the school.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) were introduced 2 years later, in the 2011-2012 school year. The staff was introduced to PBIS and the STOIC strategies at an all-certificated professional development meeting. The following school year the staff began to implement the strategies of the PBIS model. The first year of implementation showed a slight decrease in office referrals and a significant increase in student achievement, as evidenced by the results of the 2011-2012 Benchmark, CST, and school-wide API scores. The majority of the staff accepted that the increase in school-wide achievement was the result of students remaining in the classrooms and engaging in the instruction. While there was not 100% buy-in at this point, the data showed a 22% increase in African American student achievement in math and 17% increase in African American achievement in English Language Arts. Some accredited the increases to a “better set of sixth graders” entering the school that year. Several veteran teachers were the most vehement in opposing the implementation of a school-wide PBIS program. The principal and PBIS team provided mandatory PBIS professional development, which was supplemented with cultural relevancy training.
provided by the district’s Human Relations Department the following year. Monthly reports were published to all staff, providing information about the number of referrals written and who wrote them. As a result, referrals that typically would have been written for minor infractions—for example, “Student arrived to class unprepared to learn” or “He/she didn’t have a pencil”—became more the exception than the rule.

By the 2012-2013 school year, almost 85% of the staff had complete buy-in and supported the schools focus on PBIS. At the end of that year, the number of ODRs had been cut in half from the 2008-2010 baseline. Although there were still a significant number of referrals written in the 2012-2013 school year (695), the referrals were written for more serious behavioral issues, and most of those behaviors did not occur in the classroom. Of the 695 referrals written, 256 were written for African American male students. Most of the referrals written in the 2012-2013 school year were written for repeat offenders. The study did not include referrals that were written for African American male students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); however, a significant number of referrals written in the 2012-2013 school year were for African American males with IEPs.

It should also be noted that of the 695 referrals written in the 2012-2013 school year, over one-third of the referrals (269) were written by four White veteran teachers, two female and two male. The researcher formed a focus group with these four teachers to get their insights about, understanding of, and ideas for school-wide PBIS.

Although the Watson Middle School has yet to achieve complete buy-in of the PBIS program, 95% of the staff indicated that the implementation of PBIS has been a positive change that helps students to achieve. The significant gains African American
students made in standardized testing indicates that the strategies and interventions used by the staff to improve student behaviors has had a positive impact on all African American students, particularly African American males. The staff also supports continued professional development of PBIS to foster a deeper understanding and to continue making gains in student achievement.

Responses from staff members in regard to the implementation of PBIS identified areas they felt positively about, as well as those they believe must continue to improve. Staffers reported they are confident that building positive relationships with students had a direct effect on student achievement. They indicated that the students are aware of what it means to be a student on PARR (Prepared, Attentive, Respectful, and Responsible) as a result of school-wide implementation of PBIS.

Concerns identified by staff members highlighted the importance of getting full staff buy-in in order to ensure greater growth in student achievement. The administrators agreed to continue to support the full implementation of PBIS, continue whole and small group professional development sessions based on PBIS and STOIC, share data and decision-making responsibilities, and continue celebrating each milestone attained as a result of the implementation of the PBIS strategies.

**Research Question Two**

*What are teachers who implement PBIS with fidelity experiencing in their classrooms in regards to student behavior and academic achievement?*

Teachers who have implemented the PBIS strategies with fidelity experienced fewer behavioral issues throughout the period of implementation as compared with the teachers who practiced few or none of the tiered interventions. The PBIS approach is
proactive rather than the more typical and customary reactive approach. As more of the staff began to use the interventions, fewer referrals were written, which in turn resulted in fewer suspensions and expulsions. External evaluations of teachers using the PBIS interventions included direct observations, interviews, and the review of before and after ODR data. Classroom monitoring was frequent, with an emphasis on how well all were doing with the implementation. Were all really using the PBIS interventions? Were all really using the data to determine the best-possible next steps?

During classroom visits with teachers who were implementing PBIS with fidelity, the researcher found that those teachers shared basic attitudes that indicated an interest in trying to use positive rather than punitive and exclusionary methods. It is also important to note that teachers with 10 or fewer years of teaching experience were more apt to share those constructive attitudes than the teachers with 10 or more years of experience. Consistent with the hypothesis that teachers who implemented PBIS strategies with fidelity would experience fewer behavioral issues in their classrooms, the number of ODRs per student for disruptive behavior decreased. The reduction in ODRs not only indicates a reduction in disciplinary issues but also that teachers were using interventions inside the classroom, as opposed to sending the students out of it. The results were an increase in instructional time.

No formal data were collected on the loss of instructional minutes that a student experiences when he or she is sent to the office, but it is estimated that a minimum of 20-30 minutes are lost with each ODR. Certainly, students and schools function more effectively and efficiently when students are in classes. Students’ academic achievements rise as a result of an increase in instructional time spent in the classroom rather than an
administrator’s office. As a result of the reduced number of African American students excluded from instruction in the classroom, African American students at Watson Middle School experienced an increase of 22% in their math scores and 17% in their English Language Arts scores. The 22% increase in math for this subgroup was one of the highest gains in the district. The reduced number of ODRs also resulted in a reduction in the number of students being suspended or expelled, which also had significant positive impact in terms of achievement among African American students. Results from this study indicate that students’ improved performance on standardized tests in the areas of ELA and math during this research project were in part linked to behavioral indicators (office referrals, suspensions, expulsions) and the increased time spent in the classroom.

Although the reduction in ODRs as a result of improved student behavior played a significant role in student achievement, teachers who have experienced the improved performance in students’ academics credit much of the newfound success as to building positive relations with the students. During the focus group interviews, one of the most common themes was that “students need to know that you care about him or her as a person and not just as another number.” This type of statement was consistent among, certificated, classified, administrative, custodial, security and cafeteria personnel. A major implication of this study is that teachers who practice PBIS strategies with fidelity are experiencing fewer student behavioral issues. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports sustained over a period of time should have a significant impact on improving academic performance, primarily through increasing the amount of time students spend in their classrooms.
Although the implementation of the PBIS strategies has greatly contributed to the overall effect on student achievement, other factors also contributed to the gains in student achievement. Those factors include classroom instructional strategies. It is important to note that some teachers who have not completely bought-in to PBIS maintain excellent instructional skills, lesson planning, and curriculum developing. The challenges that most of those teachers face relate to classroom management skills. Test-taking skills are another contributing factor for the gains in student achievement. Each content area has developed an in-depth series of test-taking skills that are presented to all students 3 days per week beginning 4 weeks prior to the actual testing window. The character lessons are televised throughout the school and practiced daily. A third factor to be considered is the implementation of Saturday school. Students who miss school for any reason, with the exception of suspension, may make up the absence at Saturday school. Teachers provide assignments that the students missed during their absence. The students are able to make up the work missed with the aide of student volunteers from the University of California, San Diego.

**Research Question Three**

*What impact did the implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports plan have on the school culture of the middle school?*

The results of the study reported thus far have focused on the positive effects of implementing PBIS school-wide. Data indicate that staff morale, student achievement, student and staff attendance, school safety issues, and teacher self-efficacy have been positively affected by improvements in student behavior. The success of PBIS in any school depends on the sustainability of the program. Data indicate that student behavior
improves when a model such as PBIS is used. Student achievement, time spent in the classroom, and fewer ODRs are examples of the impact the implementation of the PBIS program has had at Watson Middle School. Data also indicate that without fidelity, even PBIS models are subject to fail or at least fall short in terms of improving behaviors to the desired levels. This study focused specifically on the effects of PBIS on African American male students. Data reveal that even at the middle school level, PBIS does not affect all age groups or even all types of students equally.

Focusing on school culture, 89% of students feel Watson Middle School is a safe campus as opposed to 59% prior to the implementation of PBIS. Ninety-four percent of teachers feel that students feel safe in their classrooms. The percentages drop to 78% in the cafeteria and in the parking lot. Eighty-four percent of staff, including custodians, cafeteria, and campus security personnel indicated that student behavior had significantly improved. All staffers agreed that the public recognition of students for being on PARR was one of the main factors resulting in improved student behavior. The overall effect of PBIS at Watson Middle School has been positive. Behavioral incidents and negative teacher-student interactions are in decline, which results in teachers with more time to teach a better environment in which to learn, and more positive experiences for students. The introduction of PBIS on campus has armed teachers with more tools and strategies to use when addressing inappropriate student behaviors. Most teachers have adopted this student-centered behavioral approach, which focuses on each student and his or her specific behavior, as well as its underlying causes.

A number of studies prior to this one have illustrated that school-wide behavioral supports decrease problem behavior, increase time spent in academic instruction, and are
associated with improved academic outcomes. Although PBIS was not fully implemented school-wide, the data collected thus far suggest that the previous studies are accurate. The impact of partial implementation is encouraging but is not descriptive enough to fully confirm the relationship between school-wide PBIS and improved academic performance. Further collection of data is needed to fully establish the basis for the gains in academic performance. This study has demonstrated that there is a link between problem behavior and academics. Those conclusions were also supported by prior research. The research verified that teachers who were implementing PBIS with some fidelity experienced fewer behavioral issues in their classrooms than teachers who used very few or none of the PBIS interventions. Teachers who have embraced the PBIS interventions and have adopted positive relationship-building techniques have found that the behavioral climate in their classrooms contributes to more effective instruction.

Another positive result related to the implementation of PBIS strategies is the increase in attendance. Prior to the implementation at Watson Middle School, the school ranked between 17 and 21 among 25 middle schools in the district in terms of attendance. In the 2012-2013 school year, Watson climbed to second in attendance for all middle schools in the district. The average daily attendance exceeded the average district-wide rate for the first time in 7 years. Studies have been completed demonstrating that school-wide behavioral support can improve variables, such as student attendance, that lead to improved academic performance. Time spent in school is essential for students to experience greater academic success, whereas students who are continuously excluded because of behavioral issues suffer greatly in regard to academic achievement.
Fewer ODRs make it possible for administrators to spend more time observing in classrooms. Frequent observations make it possible for instructional leaders to provide timely feedback to teachers, including suggestions for how to create, develop, and deliver engaging, relevant instruction. The ability of teachers to provide effective and direct instruction is critical to improving students’ academic skills. When asked why they were displaying disruptive behavior in their classrooms, students most often responded that they were bored. Disengaged students often engage in inappropriate behaviors, which ultimately result in some negative consequences for the student. With full implementation of PBIS, the number of students disengaged from classroom tasks should be significantly decreased.

**Future Study of PBIS in Middle Schools**

The 36-month school-wide PBIS implementation in an urban middle school produced both noteworthy outcomes and concerns that will be the basis for continued efforts at Watson Middle, as well as the focus of future investigations. Results indicate that the 36-month implementation of PBIS strategies and interventions had a direct, positive effect on the overall number of ODRs written, as well as the number written for African American male students. Future research in this area should focus on determining (a) what other interventions are needed to reduce the percentage of African American male students who receive referrals, and (b) who is writing those referrals. Certainly, more work is needed to assess the impact of PBIS over a longer period of time and the feasibility for sustained application with ongoing refinements. Introducing PBIS in a middle school with a veteran staff presented challenges. Although Watson Middle School has yet to reach 100% buy-in from staff-wide, a significant number of certificated
and classified employees did acknowledge the value of implementing the strategies. That said questions remain: What strategies might be most effective to support late adopters? What impact does a school-wide change of this magnitude have on influencing nonadopters to retire or transfer? What impact does that attrition have on increasing school-wide fidelity?

Building internal capacity to sustain the gains that have been made thus far is the key to the success or failure of PBIS. It took 3 years for Watson Middle School to make the progress detailed in this study. The overall number of ODRs was reduced during that period, as was the number of ODRs written for African American male students. Although there is still a long way to go, the present level of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions is a cause for celebration. This study looked at decreasing the number of disciplinary referrals and assumed a relationship between referrals and punitive actions such as suspension and expulsion. Future studies might examine those assumptions further.

Additional research on the impact of school-wide behavioral supports on academic achievement is needed. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports appears to be an intervention that has a positive impact on academic achievement. Changes in academic performance of the school were outside the scope of this study, but they must ultimately be considered to further establish the importance of purposefully building school culture as a means of promoting school achievement.

The only subgroup in which data were disaggregated for this study was African American male students. Future research should also focus on whether inequities or concerns exist, and are attenuated, with other subgroups such as Latinos.
This study centered on concern that punitive disciplinary actions in schools are overused and relied on despite scant data supporting their efficacy and positive impact. That concern remains, and it, along with support of effective alternatives, requires continued study. There is no doubt that positive and restorative practices that purposefully build more effective school cultures merit considerable attention.

In this study, the overall ODRs and suspensions decreased both school-wide and in reference to African American males. However, African American male students remained overrepresented in ODRs and suspensions. It appears that the first 36 months of the school-wide implementation of PBIS is changing the culture of the Watson Middle School. However, as the model continues to be applied and refined, attention to more proactively supporting African American males is needed. Future research should include the question: Is seniority significant in terms of how and why teachers write referrals on students? Also, the literature review would explore the effect that cultural relevance, awareness, and proficiency have on who writes office referrals. How can those cultural considerations be better integrated into the PBIS model implementation? Those school-wide practices in tandem with subgroup specific interventions deserve further attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Future research is warranted on the relationship between ODRs and the actual reduction in exclusionary practices. What impact do State, District and school policies have on the site administrator in assigning consequences? What parameter is used with zero tolerance policies and how much freedom of interpretation or judgment is the site administrator allowed? Other questions for future study should include how does the use of ODRs, classroom
management, and high expectations help administrators to effectively develop and evaluate teachers?
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Schmidt, P. R. (2004). Supporting culturally relevant pedagogy: “It made the difference!”
In R. Perry (Chair), *Culturally responsive teaching and third space theory.*
Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference,
San Antonio, TX.


*Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(2), 124-137.
San Diego State University

Consent to Act as a Research Subject: Teacher

The Discipline Discrepancy of African American Males:
A Design Experiment Approach to Investigating the
Overrepresentation of African American Males in
Exclusionary Discipline Practices

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

This study is being conducted by me, Michael O. Dodson, Principal of Alexander Graham Bell Middle School in the San Diego Unified School District. I am also a doctoral student of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University. During this study I will only be a researcher. This study will be supervised by Dr. Ian Pumpian, a professor in the School of Education at San Diego State University.

The purpose of this study is to gain greater understanding about the impacts of implementing school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on student behaviors. The results will reported in my dissertation that I will complete as a requirement of my graduate program. You have been identified for this study because you are a teacher at Bell Middle School and your input and feedback will be beneficial as I
report my findings to district leadership. If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to:

- Spend approximately 45-50 minutes answering questions in a small focus group or if you prefer in a one on one interview at a mutually agreeable time and location. I will ask you about your experience with PBIS, and your feelings regarding school-wide implementation of the PBIS strategies.
- Allow me to tape record our interviews. The tape will help me more accurately represent your ideas and views. I will be the only individual who has access to the tapes. Comments from the tape used in reporting study results will be shared in a way that protects your confidentiality.

You may feel a slight burden by taking the time to participate in the interview given that you have a busy life, and may feel additional workload by being asked to participate in an interview or focus group. To minimize this risk I will work to schedule appointments at times convenient for the participants. If you are interested, I will be sharing my findings in a report that I will make available to you upon final approval of my dissertation committee. You may learn about district wide implementation of PBIS by your participation in this study.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent of the law. Your name will be coded to match data collected. All names in work published by me will be pseudonyms. Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. Quotes from the observations and interviews may be used for publication of findings but no participant will be identified by name. Additionally, the findings will not include individuals who chose to opt-out before,
during, or after any part of the research process. Your participation will remain confidential (this means that I will conceal your identity and only codes will be used on interview forms and notes that I take) except required by law. Research files (including audiotapes) will be stored in the finance office safe for the next three years. Only the researcher, finance officer will have access to these files. There are no costs to you for participation in this study. You will not be paid or compensated in any way for your participation. There is no penalty if you choose to discontinue participation. Again, I am conducting this study as a researcher and I will not use this information to evaluate you as a teacher in any way.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with me, San Diego State University, or your position with San Diego Unified School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor Dr. Ian Pumpian at ipumpian@mail.sdsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Affairs at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

The San Diego State Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Boards stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.
Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about this study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in this study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

___________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

___________________________________           ____________________
Signature of Participant                                           Date

___________________________________           ____________________
Signature of Researcher                                           Date
APPENDIX B

School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET)

Additional Interviews

In addition to the administrator interview questions, there are questions for Behavior Support Team members, staff and students. Interviews can be completed during the school tour. Randomly select students and staff as you walk through the school. Use this page as a reference for all other interview questions. Use the interview and observation form to record student, staff, and team member responses.

Staff Interview Questions

Interview a minimum of 10 staff.

1) What are the __________________ (school rules, high 5's, 3 bee’s)? (B5) (Define what the acronym means)

2) Have you taught the school rules/behavioral expectations this year? (B2)

3) Have you given out any _______________________ since ___________? (C3) (rewards for appropriate behavior) (2 months ago)

4) What types of student problems do you or would you refer to the office? (D2)

5) What is the procedure for dealing with a stranger with a gun? (D4)

6) Is there a school-wide team that addresses behavioral support in your building?

7) Are you on the team?

Team Member Interview Questions

1) Does your team use discipline data to make decisions? (E4)

2) Has your team taught/reviewed the school-wide program with staff this year? (B3)

3) Who is the team leader/facilitator? (F4)
Student interview Questions

Interview a minimum of 15 students

1) What are the ________________ (school rules, high 5's, 3 bee’s)? (B4)
   (Define what the acronym means.)

2) Have you received a ________________ since ________________? (C2)
   (reward for appropriate behavior) (2 months ago)
Effective Behavior Support Survey

Positive Behavior Support - Secondary Staff Survey: Cohort 7

We are working to improve our school. This survey is designed to find out what our staff members think about: student safety; how students interact with each other; how students and staff members interact with each other; rules and expectations for student behavior; how students feel about the school in general; how staff members interact with parents/families; how staff members interact with each other, behavior management and discipline procedures; and potential problems.

Please respond to every item by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Your responses will be completely anonymous.

Thank you for taking the time to help us make our school a better place for everybody. Please tell us about yourself.

2. Classification:
   - Certificated staff member
   - Classified staff member

3. Building Status:
   - Permanent
   - Itinerant

4. Grades taught:
   - 6th
   - 7th
   - 8th
   - 9th
   - 10th
   - 11th
   - 12th
### STUDENT SAFETY AND INTERACTION

5. Tell us what you think about student safety at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the cafeteria/lunchroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the hallways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the locker rooms/gym.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the restrooms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the courtyard/commons area(s).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe when taking the bus (or walking) to and from school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in the parking lot.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel safe in their classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a student knew that another student was involved in something illegal or dangerous to him/herself or to someone else, the student would let a staff member know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/families feel that the school/staff has done a good job of making the school a safe place for their students to be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Tell us how you think students at this school generally interact with each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for students to make friends.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the cafeteria/lunchroom.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the hallways.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the locker room/gym.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the courtyard/commons area(s).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the loading/unloading area(s).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully when they are on the buses.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in the parking lot.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat each other respectfully in their classrooms.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT/STAFF INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION

7. Tell us how you think students and staff members’ interact with each other at this school. (*Note: “staff members” means all staff members.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students treat staff members with respect.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members are friendly and helpful to students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members are support of students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members treat students fairly.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members treat students respectfully.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members encourage students to do their best.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members let students know when they do things right.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If students have a problem they can't solve on their own, they know they can go to a staff member for help.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Tell us about the communication of rules and expectations for student behavior at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior in the cafeteria/lunchroom.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior in the hallways.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior in the locker room/gym.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior in the courtyard/commons area(s).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules for behavior in their classrooms.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules for appropriate behavior in the restrooms.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior in the bus loading/unloading areas.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are taught the rules and expectations for behavior when riding the bus (or walking) to and from school.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/families are informed about the rules and expectations for student behavior at this school.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For most classes, teachers give students a course syllabus (i.e., a description of course objectives, assignments, and timelines).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For most classes, teachers do a good job of making sure students understand the grading procedures and policies.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For most classes, teachers do a good job of making sure students know how they can get help if they fall behind.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL AND STAFF

#### 9. Tell us how you think students feel toward this school in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are glad to come to the school most of the time.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students believe that the work they do at the school is important.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are proud to be part of the school.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 10. Tell us how you think parents/families perceive/experience this school and the school staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/families who visit the school are welcomed, treated with respect, and encouraged to come back.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school/staff does a good job of providing help when parents/families ask for or need it.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school/staff does a good job of communicating with parents/families.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If parents/families had concerns about their student or about the school, they would feel comfortable discussing the situation with a staff member.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STAFF INTERACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/DISCIPLINE

11. Tell us what you think about staff interactions and the behavior management/discipline practices at our school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members do a good job of communicating with each other.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members treat each other with respect.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has a consistent approach to behavior management and discipline.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has adequate systems for identifying and helping students who are at risk of falling through the cracks (academically and/or behaviorally).</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive sufficient support when I have to deal with difficult students and/or with discipline problems.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of when and how I am expected to monitor student behavior.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of when and how I am expected to motivate/encourage students to do their best.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of how I am expected to respond to student misbehavior.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of what my role and responsibilities are in emergency situations.</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POSSIBLE PROBLEMS AT THIS SCHOOL

12. Tell us whether you think the following issues represent problems at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate language is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate student dress is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate sexual contact between students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students having weapons is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/alcohol/tobacco use by students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft or damage of school property by students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student cliques (i.e., students excluding other students) are a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students physically assaulting other students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students threatening or bullying other students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students picking on (or harassing) other students is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial conflicts are a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial harassment is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student behavior with substitutes is a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive tardies are a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive absences are a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student threats/violence toward staff members are a problem.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMENTS

13. Please add anything else you think we should know.