CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT COACHING AS A MEANS TO TRANSFORM INEQUITABLE SCHOOL WIDE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES: PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, COACHES, AND TEACHERS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

African American students are suspended and expelled from school at frightening rates. In many instances, they are disciplined for actions that could be addressed with measures other than exclusionary discipline practices. Punitive discipline practices place students on a path to incarceration and does not actually correct student behavior. This sequence is known as the School to Prison Pipeline. This research study focuses on classroom management coaching and ongoing teacher development as a strategy for reducing teacher dependency on punitive discipline by teaching proactive measures of student behavior management. Qualitative research methods are used to examine the perspectives of administrators, coaches, and teachers regarding the costs and benefits of coaching and ongoing teacher development in an urban school district. Administrators, coaches, and teachers agree that the benefits of coaching and ongoing teacher coaching outweigh the costs. Student discipline referrals and out of school suspension rates declined significantly over the years that classroom management coaching was implemented. While classroom management coaching and ongoing teacher development are effective practices to improve school wide behavior, there remains a need to provide development in the areas of culturally relevant approaches to student engagement. Colorblind approaches to student behavior management do not address racism as the root of disproportionate discipline practices. Therefore, the problem with using excessive discipline for African American students is not being rectified.
Ma and grandma, this dissertation is dedicated to you. You taught me that freedom is acquired through knowledge. Your love and confidence in me pushes me to pursue my dreams. Your selflessness inspires me to be a blessing to others.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Delinquency, expulsion, suspension, zero-tolerance, and mass incarceration are terms that have become frequently associated with the education of youth in America. Students are enrolled in school to receive an education that will prepare them advance in society. However, plenty of students are pushed away. The education system has embraced tools and practices of the modern criminal justice system and students have been directed away from mainstream education environments and funneled towards prison via the school to prison pipeline (Heitzegm, 2009). The NAACP (2005) reported that the school to prison pipeline is one of the most urgent challenges in education today. Schooling is resulting in mass incarceration instead of education.

Alexander (2011) asserts that mass incarceration is the new Jim Crow and “that all those who care about social justice should fully commit themselves to dismantling this new racial caste system.” (P. 11) Alexander continues to explain that mass incarceration is the most damaging manifestation of the backlash against the civil rights movement. Mass incarceration and the school to prison pipeline in disproportionate rates are impacting children of color. Research demonstrates that children of color are overrepresented at every stage of the school to prison pipeline “from enrollment in under-resourced public schools to suspension and expulsion rates to referrals to disciplinary
alternative schools to law enforcement and the juvenile justice system.” (Kim, C. et al, 2010, p. 34)

School –level characteristics such as supportive leadership, dedicated and collegial staff, school-wide behavior management, effective academic instruction can help minimize the risks for youth delinquency (Christle, 2004). The risks for delinquency that youth may experience, especially the school-related risks of academic failure, suspension, and dropping out can be reduced in schools that provide high structure, consistently high-quality programs, and proactive behavior programs (Christle, 2004).

Despite the frequent use of exclusionary discipline practices, they are not effective in reducing the target behavior problems that they are used to improve. (Civil Rights Project, 2000; McCord, Widom, Bamba, & Crowell, 2000 as cited in Cristle, 2004) There is a dire need to explore options for improving the culture and climate of institutions of learning; punitive and exclusionary discipline practices are not the only options.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasizes professional development as a resource for improving the skills and effectiveness of teachers. Continuous professional development and coaching for the teachers can help reduce the frequency of student suspensions by equipping teachers with strategies for responding to student behavior that will allow students to remain in the classroom where they belong. More importantly, professional development and coaching gives teachers an arsenal of proactive responses that can help students avoid negative behavior. The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program provides support for teachers in the form of coaching (Hershfeldt, 2012).
Background of the Problem

“In every state across our nation, African Americans – particularly in the poorest neighborhoods – are subjected to tactics and practices that would result in public outrage and scandal if committed in middle-class white neighborhoods.” (Alexander, 2011, p 98)

Recent educational practices have blurred the line between school and jail instead of creating an environment that fosters learning, engagement, and opportunities (Heitzegm, 2009). The school to prison pipeline is a result of schools that criminalize minor disciplinary infractions through zero tolerance policies, have police officers in the school, and assign suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions (Heitzegm, 2009, p 2). As Kozol (2005) states, “At issue are the values of a nation that writes off many of its poorest children in deficient urban schools starved of all the riches found in good suburban schools, nearby, criminalizes those it has short-changed and cheated, and then willingly expends the times as much to punish them as it ever sent to teach them when they were still innocent and clean.” (p. 16)

Many of the youth affected by zero tolerance discipline do not reenter the mainstream educational system and their potential contributions to society are lost. Additionally, communities become committed to expending more resources to deal with the problems that the lost students can potentially pose as adults than what it would cost to adequately fund education (NAACP, 2005) The African American community suffers the greatest loss as a result of the school to prison pipeline. African American males are being trapped at disproportional rates.

Black students are suspended at a rate that does not align with their proportion of the student population. Latino students are suspended and expelled at high rates also, but Black students have the highest disproportionate rates of the discipline practices. The
rate of suspensions for Black students is so dynamic in 21 states that the percentage of Black suspensions is more than double their percentage of student enrollment. In other states, Black students are expelled six times more frequently than White students. There are even school districts where the rate of Black student expulsions is more than ten times higher than Whites. The national average is that Black students are suspended and expelled nearly three times as often as White students. Black students account for 17% of all school age youth. Yet, they make up 37% of suspensions and 35% of expulsions (Witt, 2007). Black students are punished with harsher measures than their non-minority peers for the same behaviors even when controlling for socioeconomic status (ABA, 2005 as cited in Heitzegm, 2009).

Zero tolerance rhetoric is an offspring of the War on Drugs. It became popularized as school officials and community leaders cried out after gang shootings and an influx of “super-predators” as portrayed by the media (Heitzegm, 2009) Zero tolerance policies can be traced back to the federal Guns Free Schools Act of 1994 as a response to school shootings and a perceived increase in gun violence (Kim, et al 2010) Such policies were enforced despite the stable or declining rates of school crime (Heitzegm, 2009). Today, zero tolerance applies to suspension or expulsion of children from school for everything from weapons to drugs to smoking to fights (Kim et al, 2010). Zero tolerance has even been implemented in response to minor violations of rules such as tardiness and disorderly conduct (Heitzegm, 2009) The American Bar Association (2001) notes that zero-tolerance policies do not distinguish between serious and non-serious offenses, nor do they separate intentionally disruptive students from those who have behavioral disorders.
Purpose of the Study

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a school-wide discipline model based on the notion that transforming behavior not only focuses on reducing inappropriate behaviors, but teaching suitable alternatives also (Banks, 2015). PBIS is used to establish a continuum of proactive, positive discipline procedures for students and staff members in different settings (Netzel & Eber, 2003). The interest in coaching models increased as a result of concerns about the effectiveness of teachers using classroom-based curricula (Hershfeldt, et al, 2012). The coaching model is a non-curricular universal prevention strategy that aims to alter the school environment by creating improved systems that promote positive change in staff and student behaviors. Coaches consult with teachers and provide support in the use of evidence-based practices, providing support in problem-solving student issues through a behavioral approach (with a focus on the function of behavior), and attending meetings that addressed student needs (e.g., student support team meetings) (Hershfeldt, et al, 2012).

The outcomes of poor classroom management and exclusionary student discipline practices contribute to the demise of students across the country. Students are denied an opportunity to engage in high quality education when classrooms are managed poorly. Furthermore, students are assigned consequences that impact them harshly. Many consequences contribute to negative outcomes for the students’ futures. The purpose of this study is to give participating teachers, coaches, and administrators a platform from which they can voice their perspectives and contribute to the discussion of classroom management and student discipline. If Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coaching is a promising resource for teachers. It is important to understand what
makes it successful, the reasons why teachers participate, and how it has affected student outcomes. On the contrary, if PBIS is unsuccessful, qualitative research can be used to explore reasons for failure.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was introduced in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 over the years, its use has expanded and it is used to address school-wide behavioral needs of students. It incorporates wall-to-wall positive strategies that teach desired behaviors and reinforces the behaviors by using incentivized strategies. (Sugai Horner, & Gresham, 2002) School-wide PBIS implementation is achieved by, “(a) emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation and progress monitoring of evidence based behavioral practices; and (b) organizing resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity” (Sugai & Simonson, 2012).

This qualitative research study creates a space for educators to add their voice to the research on school-wide behavior management practices. Such a voice adds depth to the knowledge provided by previous studies. They can speak to their experiences with student misconduct, discipline practices, teacher accountability, professional support, and student outcomes. Their truths are invaluable and should be used to influence policies and practices at the school level and beyond.

**Research Questions**

The main research questions for this research study include:

(1) What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the benefits and costs of continuous teacher development/ coaching in relation to classroom management and student discipline?
Subsidiary questions include:

(a) How can continuous teacher development/coaching be improved?
(b) What is the principal’s role in developing the classroom management skills of teachers?

Significance of the Study

African American students are marginalized by exclusionary discipline practices at rates that are alarming and disproportional considering the percentage of African American students enrolled in schools in comparison to students of different ethnic backgrounds (Heitzegem, 2009). The effects of such discipline practices contribute to a potential life of delinquency and destitution for many, as they adopt negative behaviors, opt to stay out of school, or lose their sense of belonging in the school and fail to achieve academic success (Heitzegem, 2009).

This research study examines Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) coaching as a proactive alternative to suspension and expulsion. Teachers receive professional development and coaching that helps them create welcoming learning environments for the students and rewards positive behavior. Students are rewarded with incentives as they display improved behavior. Additionally, student misbehavior is addressed with social-emotional support in lieu of generic punitive consequences. PBIS can potentially help create a desirable learning environment that supports the needs of teachers and students.

Theoretical Framework
Anfara and Mertz (2006) define a theoretical frameworks as, “any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels, that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena. (p. xxvii) A useful theory should tell a story about a phenomenon. It should provide a broadened understanding of the phenomenon. Agnew and Pyke (1969) suggest that good theory should be (1) simple, (2) testable, (3) novel, (4) supportive of other theories, (5) internally consistent, and (6) predictive.

Critical Race Theory was conceptualized in the 1970s by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman as a result of their distress regarding the dragging tempo of racial reform in America. They felt that modern approaches were required to “understand and come to grips with the more subtle, but just as deeply entrenched, varieties of racism that characterize our times.” (Delgado, 1995, p xiii) In contrast to traditional civil rights, as it embraces incrementalism, Critical Race Theory “questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principals of constitutional law.” (Delgado et al, 2001 p. 3)


Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life. Critical Race Theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy. Critical Race Theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law… Critical Race Theorists… adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society. Critical Race is
interdisciplinary. Critical Race Theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (Dixson, et al 2005).

Critical Race Theory asserts that racism is normal in American society. Therefore, it seems natural to members of the culture. Formal equal opportunity can only improve extreme forms of injustice; it cannot remedy the covert racism that people of color confront everyday. (Delgado, 1995) Racism is difficult to address or cure when it has been reduced to ordinary.  Ladson-Billings (1998) argues that Critical Race theory must unmask racism in its array of varieties so that it can be exposed.

Critical Race Theory is committed to anti-racism and its concern extends beyond civil rights, integration, affirmative action, and other liberal measures (Bell, 1995). “Critical race theorists are concerned with disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that work to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people and that attempt to maintain the status quo” (Milner, 2008, p. 333) Critical Race Theory incorporates activism. Not only do Crits try to understand the social situation of racism, but Critical Race Theory strives to transform the way society is organized along racial lines and hierarchies (Delgado, et al, 2001)

A critical tenet of Critical Race Theory is narratives. People’s stories are crucial to sincerely understanding their experiences and how their experiences can serve to confirm or counter understanding of the way society functions (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Critical Race Theory promotes activism. According to Delgado (2001), “It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the
better.” (p. 3) The narratives should trigger a response of action, as social activism is a requirement of Critical Race Theory projects (Dixson, et al, 2005).

Interest conversion is a major premise of Critical Race Theory. “It stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites.” (Milner, 2008, p. 333) Interest convergence addresses the manner in which elite whites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks, but only when white self-interest is preserved (Delgado, 1995). The question whether Civil Rights laws were designed to benefit blacks or to control the pace of racial progress. Rapid change could have been perceived to be unsettling to society at large and change at too slow of a pace could have been destabilizing (Delgado, 1995). “Change is often purposefully and skillfully slow and at the will and design of those in power.” (Milner, 2008, p. 334)

The sacrifice necessary for real social change to take place is sometimes too painful or inconceivable; it may be difficult for those in our country to take serious strides toward racial, social, and economic justice because it means that, in some cases some group has to give up something of interest to it, such as its privileges and its ways of life. The problem is that many worry about how change can threaten their position, status, and privilege (Bell, 1980) and consequently, the status of their children and future generations. (Milner, 2008, p. 334)

Those in power almost always cut back the rights of others when their rights are challenged (Delgado et al, 2001).

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) proposed that Critical Race Theory could be used to examine the role of race and racism in education (as cited in Dixson, et al 2005). They highlighted the intersection of race and property rights and
how this construct can help explain inequity in schools and schooling. Tate (1999) presumes that Critical Race Theory scholarship in education should build on the scholarship found in the critical race legal literature, but is should also go beyond it (as cited in Dixson, et al, 2005).

As stated by Ladson-Billings (1999), “adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it.” (p. 27) Therefore, an important criteria of Critical Race Theory is that is must combat oppression (Dixson, et al, 2005). It is insufficient to identify racism, yet, not do anything to resolve it.

Many instructional practices presume that African American students are inferior when evaluated from a Critical Race Theory stance. Consequently, classroom teachers begin an eternal search for “the right strategy or technique (read: control) for at risk (read: African American) students.” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22) The language of failure leads to instructional approaches that usually involve a form of remediation (Ladson-Billings, 1998) The students, not the strategies, are found to be inadequate when the desired results are not achieved (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p 22).

Some might argue that poor children perform lower than other students regardless of their race and that the high proportion of poor African American students is the reason for their bleak school performance. Critics argue that the cause of their poverty combined with the conditions of their schools and schooling experiences are institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings, et al, 1995). Wellman (1977) defines racism as “culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the
advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities.” (p. xi) Kozol (1991) argues that schools that serve predominantly poor students of color present limited opportunities for the students to learn because they are unlikely to provide adequate resources for the students.

Black students’ educational experiences and outcomes are drastically impacted by racism. Critical Race Theory is a phenomenal framework for uncovering the elements of racism and identifying measures for correcting the injustices experienced by students across the country. Critical Race Theory can be used to identify solutions that can help improve the learning conditions of students and help them achieve academic excellence instead of being scrutinized by marginalizing discipline practices.

Definition of Terms

School Climate - School learning climate pertains to the attitudinal and behavioral patterns in a school that affect the level of achievement. This includes such factors as teachers’ expectations for and evaluations of students’ learning, academic norms, students’ sense of futility with respect to learning, role definitions, grouping patterns, and instructional practices (Brookover, 1982).

Discipline - Discipline refers to dealing with student behavior with respect to manners, following instructions, disruption of routine, and consideration of the rights of others (Brookover, 1982).

Problem students – Problem students are those who possess one or more of the following characteristics in school (a.) difficult, (b.) time consuming, (c.) frustrating (Brophy, 1996).
**Classroom misbehavior** – Student behavior that includes cutting/skipping class, arriving to class late, cheating on assessments, writing on school walls, fighting, bullying, and using profanity (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

**Urban school** – A school that is located in counties with a population of more than 200,000 that has an average enrollment per grade level at the secondary level exceeding 300 students (McCracken & Barcinas, 1991).

**School Culture** – The traditional, beliefs, policies, and norms within a school that can be shaped, enhanced, and maintained through the school’s principal and teacher leaders (Short & Greer, 1997).

**Racism** – “Culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities.” (Wellman, 1977, p. xviii)

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This research study was designed with integrity and will be conducted with honesty and ethics. Despite the good will and nature of the research study, it will not be conducted without delimitations and limitations. The delimitations and limitations are provided in the attempt to be transparent and to help the reader understand the context under which the research was conducted.

One of the limitations of this research project is that the results cannot be generalized. The perspectives discussed in this research study could potentially be unique to the research participants. The findings can be used to provide depth to quantitative studies, but are not true for every elementary school.
The second limitation is that it might be difficult for the researcher to bracket personal beliefs and remain open to alternate perspectives on the phenomenon. Interviews provide data that is filtered through the views of the researcher. The researcher is responsible for summarizing the participants’ views during the interview (Cresswell, 2002). The presence of the researcher can influence the responses given by the interviewee. For example, the participant can say what he/she thinks the researcher wants to hear instead of providing honest responses.

One of the delimitations is that each participant will participate in one in-depth interview. Therefore, the participants will not be able to discuss every thought they may have pertaining to the issues. The researcher will have to rely on data shared during the interviews and will not be able to conduct follow-up interviews.

Another delimitation is the sample of school administrators, coaches, and teachers. School administrators are required to have at least two years experience as an administrator in order to assure their familiarity with policies and practices. Teachers are required to have at least one full year of teaching experience so that they have extensive knowledge of at least one group of students. Coaches must have at least two years of experience in coaching. Two years of experience means that the coaches have had at least one year of practice as a coach and at least one year of solid practice as a coach. This will allow the teachers to discuss personal experiences instead of hypothetical occurrences.
Chapter 2:

Review of Literature

Introduction
Across the country, there is an alarming population of students who do not receive a quality public education daily. This problem is not the fault of the child, but it draws attention to the management of the schools and the classrooms. It is nearly impossible for a student to learn in an environment that is not conducive to learning. Lack of proper classroom management contributes to a lack of student focus, students can become disruptive, and incidents are likely to occur. Additionally, teachers assign consequences in the attempt to regain the attention of the students. “A Critical Race Theory perspective on the literature is akin to applying a new prism that may provide a different vision to our notions of school failure for diverse students.” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 216)

This review of literature will address topics within classroom management and student discipline policies. Discussion includes the school to prison pipeline, disproportional discipline data, student efficacy, teacher efficacy, teacher preparation, recruitment, staff development, the role of the school principal, and the makings of an effective school.

School-to-Prison Pipeline
Persistent race and class-based disparity in the use of punishment has contributed to a substantial disparity in education today. Students are sent to school to receive an education. However, for many, they ultimately receive incarceration in lieu of education. This phenomenon has become known as the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Yem et al (2010) defines the School-to-Prison Pipeline as the intersection between the K-12 educational
system and a juvenile justice system that fails our youth. The punitive tools and approaches of the modern criminal justice system have crept into schools over the years. Children are removed from mainstream schooling and placed on a track towards prison. The school to prison pipeline is one of the most urgent challenges in education (Heitzegm, 2009).

Public institutions fail to meet the educational and social development needs of a large population that they are responsible for serving (Yem et al, 2010). Students are set up to fail instead of succeeding. They to not receive adequate educational services, classrooms are overcrowded, there is a shortage of effective school leaders and administrators in high-needs schools, additionally, high-needs schools do not receive adequate funding for school counselors, special education services, or curriculum materials (Drum Major Institute, 2005; National Center for Schools and Communities, 2003).

Research evidence supports arguments that address a relationship between race-based and class-based disparities in suspensions and expulsions and teacher’s classroom management practices. Students of color and those of lower social economic status suffer extreme consequences as an expense of biased discipline practices. The effects are so daunting that many students do not have an opportunity to recover from the impact that school consequences have on them and they never achieve their full potential. Books (2010) shares the vantage point of an in inmate who became a product of the School-To-Prison pipeline in writing:

I liked to fool around in school. But then I fooled around too much and got put in a program for kids who got tutored at this Child Guidance Center… Then when I got back to school, the teachers were like, I hope I learned my lesson. And I did. I learned the slightest things I did I’d be
booted. So I was pissed. I mean really pissed. I didn’t think schools could do that, and they didn’t think I would be bad again, but I was worse. And look where it got me… - Twenty-four-year-old-prison inmate

The National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals issued a 1973 recommendation that “no new institutions for adults should be built and existing institutions for juveniles should be closed.” The recommendation was grounded on their finding that the prison only achieved a record of failure. Overwhelming evidence shows that the institutions create more crime than they create. (Alexander, 2011) However, the school to prison pipeline continues to direct students down a daunting path towards incarceration. Youth of color are overrepresented at every single point of the destructive pipeline. They are included in studies of under-resourced schools, suspension and expulsion, disciplinary alternative schools, law enforcement, and the juvenile justice system (Kim, et al, 2010)

Minority Student Discipline Data

From 1973 to 2006, the percentage of African American students who were suspended at least once during the school year increased from 6 percent to 15 percent. Nearly 30 years ago, Black students were nearly twice as likely to be suspended by their white counterparts (Children’s Defense Fund, 1975). Today, they are more than three times as likely to be suspended in school (U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Since the 1970s, the management of student behavior has evolved in U.S. schools. The reliance on exclusionary discipline practices has increased. Out of school suspension has become a common practice. During the 2009-2010 academic year, 1 in 9 secondary students was suspended at least once, a stark increase in comparison to fewer than 1 in 12 in 1970. The suspension rates for Black students are much higher than
the national average; 30% of Black boys and 19% of Black girls are suspended each year in U.S. high schools (Losen & Martinez, 2013 as cited in Losen, 2015). Corporal punishment has been replaced by zero-tolerance policies and schools implement surveillance strategies that were once limited to the criminal justice system (Hirschfield, 2010; Robers, Zhang, & Truman 2010; Simon, 2007 as cited in Losen, 2015).

Research has outlined the injustice of school discipline practices for decades. “Minority overrepresentation in school punishment is by no means a new finding in school discipline research. Investigations of a variety of school punishments over the past 25 years have consistently found evidence of socioeconomic and racial disproportionality in the administration of school discipline.” (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 318) Evidence of disproportionate discipline practices begin with students as young as preschoolers. According to the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, during the 2011-12 academic year, 18% of preschoolers in the United states were Black, but 48% of preschoolers who were suspended once were Black and 48% of students who were suspended multiple times were Black as well. Skiba et al (2002) notes that Black students are usually disciplined for being disrespectful and threatening, loitering, and excessive noise. Such are subjective to the person assigning the consequences.

Good, 2008 asserts that “Many teachers cannot accurately recall the extent to which they call on boys versus girls, the frequency with which students approach them, the number or private contacts they initiate with students, or the amount of class time they spend on procedural matters.” (p 18) Such a lack of awareness is problematic as it is
a contributing reason why student gender, race, ethnicity, or culture predict the quality of student learning opportunities. (Delpit, 1995 & Sadker & Sadker, 1994)

Thompson (2008) points out that ‘politely pretending not to notice students’ color makes no sense unless being of different colors is somehow shameful’ (p. 524). When students begin to internalize this shame or sense of abnormality, colour-blindness can become a form of microaggression. (Dixson, 2005, p. 16)

One should not divert accountability when the outcome can have a drastic impact on the population that is being served. In this case, students receive direct consequences for possibly unintended actions.

Although it has become a common myth that discipline problems are unavoidable in low SES, minority, or urban schools, positive, effective discipline without repressive actions is possible with all kinds of students. (Brookover, 1982) Discipline problems occur in all kinds of neighborhoods, but the responses are typically different. The norms of accepted behavior in the school make the difference, not the school. The strategies selected and implemented by the teacher and schools are the primary determining factor of the level of discipline (Brookover, 1982).

Suspension and expulsion are worrisome discipline practices that attempt to get rid of irritating or troublesome students, rather than provide the services that are needed by the student. Such practices alienate the students and make it more challenging for them to achieve academic success. Suspension and expulsion are detrimental to minority students, especially African American males, because they are disciplined more
frequently and harshly than other students (Gay, 2006; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). To make matters worse, prejudice and stereotyping are enacted upon as students are punished for subjective offenses such as disrespect. (Good, 2008) Delinquency data reveals that many youth were not suspended for serious delinquency as the cause for their first suspension. Many youth are suspended from school for minor misbehavior and do not pose a serious threat to the safety of the school when they are first removed from the school. In some incidents, it is possible that the infliction of suspension might actually increase the odds of involvement in more serious delinquency or illegal involvement later on (Losen, 2015).

Class and gender, combined or separate, cannot explain the significantly high rates of school dropout, suspension, expulsion, and failure among African-American and Latino males (Ladson-Billings, et al, 1995). African American students are punished at disproportionate rates for infractions that do not warrant such drastic consequences. For example, African-American males are suspended for “non-contact violations” – wearing items of clothing that are not allowed at school or wearing clothes in an “unauthorized” way. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)

The data affirms the need to approach school discipline practices in a manner that addresses race as the cause for inequity. Colorblind approaches will not be successful in detouring the school to prison pipeline. Color blindness can only redress acts of racism that are so pronounced that everyone would notice and condemn them. However, if racism is intertwined in general thought process and social structures to the extent that Crits believe, “the ordinary business of society – the routines, practices, and institutions
that we rely on to effect the world’s work – will keep minorities in subordinate positions.” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 22)

The Outcomes of Punitive Disciplinary Practices

School failure preludes delinquency, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, and heavy involvement in other high-risk behaviors that jeopardize the chances of having a productive and satisfying life (Bandura, 1998). Additionally, students who are suspended from school are more likely to experience grade retention, high school dropout, arrest, and incarceration (Arum & Beattie, 1999; Bowditch, 1993; Febelo et al., 2011 as cited in Losen, 2015). Therefore, educational systems are necessary to teach students strategies for learning throughout their life times. Students should become adaptable, proficient learners. Many discipline practices and policies provide the contrary and do not equip students for success.

Brophy (1996) defines “problem students” as difficult, time consuming, frustrating, and or time consuming. It appears as though schools are utilizing discipline policies to push problem students out of school instead of addressing the issues behind student behavior in order to help the students excel in their studies. For example, in 2004, more than 3.2 million school suspensions were issued along with more than 106,000 expulsions. Therefore, schools that implement zero-tolerance policies and other punitive measures to control their students’ behavior are actually making matters worse (Kim et al, 2010).

Teachers’ responses to students dictate the outcome of incidents in the classroom. Teachers are likely to respond to students with concern, assistance, and attempts to provide long-term solutions when they are not irritated by the students’ problems or they
do not feel threatened by them. However, teachers respond with anger, rejection, and utilize punishments when they feel threatened or irritated by students (Brophy, 1996). Good (2008) contends that punishment should be used as a component of a broader response to repeated misbehavior. Punishments should not be applied in response to the teacher’s anger, nor in vengeance. The structure that students want and need can be found in credibility, but it is tainted when teachers respond to students based on their personal feelings. Students will be less likely to test teachers and are prone to accept responsibility for their behavior when they can depend on what teachers say (Good, 2008).

Consequences and punishments are enforced in classrooms in ineffective manners that have long-term negative effects on the students and fail to eradicate the occurrence of misbehavior in the classroom. Classroom research findings demonstrate that effective classroom management is more about managing a group of students and preventing problems than a method of responding to misbehavior (Brophy, 1986). Punishment can help control misbehavior, but alone, it cannot teach desirable behavior nor reduce the inclination to misbehave (Good, 2008). Typically, punishment should only be used in response to repeated misbehavior. It is a treatment of last resort for students who continually misbehave even though the teacher has provided assistance and expressed concern. Good (2008) argues that punishment is an improper response to isolated incidents, even severe ones, if there is no reason to believe that the student will repeat the action. Punishment should even be minimized with repeated misbehavior if the student is trying to improve.
**Academic Interference**

Student achievement is related to the amount of time devoted to learning (Brookover, 1982). Classes with a high percentage of at-task time have better academic achievement than classes with a low percentage of at-task time (Acheson, 1997). Therefore, students belong in the classroom where they can receive engaging instruction. Research displays strong correlations between the use of suspension and a range of negative school and student outcomes. Schools with high incidence of suspension frequently have lower academic performance and poor school climate ratings (Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004; Steinberg, Alensworth, & Johnson, 2015 as cited in Losen, 2015). Gregory et al (2010) suggests that discipline practices and the academic achievement gap are correlated. “The Black-White gap in high-school completion rates among youth who were never suspended is only 5 percentage points, compared to 15 percentage points for all White and Black boys. Similarly, controlling for suspension greatly reduces gaps in arrest and incarceration rates across racial and ethnic groups.” (Losen, 2015, p. 36)

Abrasive student discipline practices can be detrimental to a child’s academic experience. Students are keen to their teacher’s belief that they can succeed and it affects their efficacy. Students’ judgments of their capabilities and scholastic performances are influenced by teachers’ reactions to students (Jones, 1977; Meyer, 1992, Rosenthal, 1978 as cited in Bandura, 1998). Several researchers have studied the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and student attitudes. It was concluded that teaching with enthusiasm generally promotes positive student attitudes (Acheson, 1997).
Student Efficacy

In a study conducted by Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, and Larivee (1991), students with high levels of self-efficacy solved conceptual problems more successful than children of equal ability level but lower self efficacy. Students with more self-efficacy managed their work time more efficiently, demonstrated persistence, and were less likely to reject correct solutions prematurely (Bandura, 1998, p 215). Along the same lines, Bouchard-Bouchard (1990) reported that students with higher self-efficacy set higher aspirations for themselves, showed greater strategic flexibility in the search for solutions, achieved higher intellectual performances, achieved higher intellectual performances, and were more accurate in evaluating the quality of their performances, and were more accurate in evaluating the quality of their performances than were students of equal cognitive ability who were led to believe they lacked such capabilities.

Teacher Development

The belief that students of color and low-income students cannot learn well is a barrier that prevents students from learning (Brookover, 1982). All students have the ability to learn. Schools that serve predominantly minority students and children from homes with low socioeconomic status have fewer highly qualified and skilled teachers than those that serve privileged populations. Students of color in low-income schools are 3-10 times more likely to have unqualified teachers than students in predominantly White schools (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011). Teacher quality is one of the most significant variables for student success. Teachers with stronger academic ability, content knowledge, certification in the field taught, and experience produce higher student achievement (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011).
Many administrators and teacher educators agree that the lack of well-supervised clinical training throughout preparation as well as during the initial years of teaching accounts for many of the problems that teachers face (Haynes, 2014). By the same token, the ill preparation of teachers creates negative experiences and outcomes for students. According to Daniel Fallon of the University of Maryland, “The only preparation that most beginning teachers had was the semester-long student teaching experience which was not sufficient. Student teachers had not survived a series of instructional failures, experienced students’ boredom, discovered a wall of student learning resistance, or felt the isolation of ‘teaching forever.” (Haynes, 2014). Haynes (2014) argues that it takes three to seven years in the field for teachers to become highly skilled with the flexible and analytic thinking necessary for engaging learners, providing a deep conceptual understanding, and responding to the needs of the students. One of the most striking aspects of teaching is the instantaneous manner with which full responsibility is handed off (Lortie, 1975).

Darling-Hammond (1995) expresses the need to ground the licensing, testing, and evaluation of teachers in new understandings about student learning and effective teaching. Pre-service teacher education through in-service teacher professional development should emphasize deepening teachers’ understanding of the process of teaching and learning as well as understanding the students who will be served. (Darling-Hammond, 1995)

Teacher preparation should not be rushed to meet the desires of policy makers (Carter, 1995). It takes time to prepare prospective teachers for the demands of teaching. Teachers feel the results of rushed preparation and it contributes to a negative experience
for their students. When asked how their expectations of teaching differed from reality, an overwhelming majority of respondents said teaching was more difficult than they expected. Teachers described their training as “unrealistic, that responsibility made the work different, or that it was harder to achieve discipline than they thought it would be.” (Lortie, 1975)

According to Ladson Billings (1999), “Those in teacher education may need to concentrate more directly on how they define and build knowledge, how they theorize it, what knowledge counts as creditable, and who can construct and deconstruct that knowledge.” (As cited in Milner H.R., 2008) It is imperative for pre-service teachers to learn how their personal perspectives will influence their instructional practices. They should learn to have empathy for the students they will serve as well. Knowles (1992) noted that personal dispositions are more powerful in teacher learning than the teacher curriculums (Carter, 1995). Teaching is situated within an individual’s identity and sense of meaning (Knowles, 1992), and as Kagan (1992) asserted, the practice of classroom teaching remains forever rooted in personality and experience (Carter, 1995). As noted by Milner (2008),

Clearly it is important for those interested in teacher education to name the multiple realities that exist in the field, and conceptual tools (categorical language and concepts) can be useful to study, analyze, discuss, and explain realities that can contribute to “raced” policy, practice, research, and theory about and in teacher education. (p. 333)

Personal narrative studies indicate that novice teachers are relatively sound personal and pragmatic truths that are shaped by personal experiences. Novice teachers are so grounded in their personal truths that if conflict was to arise between their own beliefs and those of the instructor, they would likely question the validity of the
instructors beliefs rather than their own (Carter, 1995). Many novice teachers confront full diversity for the first time when they begin teaching. Unfortunately, novice teachers tend to disregard experiences that are different than their own (Carter, 1995). The lack of congruency contributes to misunderstandings between teachers and students. In many situations, Black students are punished as the result of such misunderstandings.

Joyce and Showers (1995) argue that the research evidence clearly indicates that skill acquisition and the ability to respond to a variety of situations requires on-the-job support. Therefore, changes in the workplace and the organization of professional development must occur; specifically in collaboration and peer coaching, and studying development and implementation (Hopkins, 2000). In schools, staff development is on a smaller scale than in business corporations. In school systems, professional development opportunities are often measured in days, and even hours, instead of weeks or months (Lortie, 1975). However, teachers indicated that their number one cause of stress is students who have serious and/or persistent behavior problems. Many teachers question their ability to work with students who have social needs and they indicate that classroom management is an area in which additional training is needed (Brophy, 1986).

Staff development can be a powerful resource for improving instructional practice. It can create the foundation for educator growth and peer support that produces new, genuine approaches to teaching and learning. Louis & Miles (1990) note that research has demonstrated that a significant amount of internal support is crucial to implementing successful reform projects (Blase, 1994).
Blasé (1994) argues that teachers can become increasingly concerned about instructional issues and work toward improving their practice if they are empowered. A teacher described a positive transformation in Darling-Hammond (2010),

“In the last several years we have had heavy staff development. I have been resistant to some of it, but I have watched and seen and tried it on anyway – and seeing things that work, I have given myself permission to look into it further. I used to say, “I’m not going to do that. It is not valuable.” Now, I’m seeing that it is valuable.” (p.3)

**Distribution of Teachers**

Disparities in the distribution of skilled teachers in high-need schools have perpetuated despite the efforts of the efforts of the No Child Left Behind Act which had intentions to provide highly certified teachers across the nation (Haynes, 2014). Students in disadvantaged schools only have a 50 percent chance that they will be taught core subjects by a teacher who holds a degree in that subject area. Teachers in low-income areas are more likely to work on an emergency waiver and are uncertified in the subject they teach (Haynes, 2014). Additionally, more than one million teachers including new hires, transition into, between, or out of the schools annually. Ingersoll et al (2003) noted an annual reshuffling of teachers from low-income to more resourced schools, from high-minority to low-minority, and from urban to suburban schools (Haynes, 2014). The Consortium on Chicago Public Schools Research’s report on teacher mobility in Chicago Public Schools (2009), shows that over half of the teaching staff turns over every three years in schools serving primarily low-income, minority students.

Schools with high stability cultivate a strong sense of collaboration among teachers and their principal. Teachers are likely to stay in schools where they view their colleagues as partners with them in
The work of improving the whole school and the conditions are well-suited for them to have the potential to be effective. (p. 4)

The impact of such staffing issues are daunting for the students. Stability is lacked in school communities that need high quality teachers desperately. A series of outstanding teachers can eradicate the learning deficits between low-income students and their more privileged peers. Similarly, the residual effects of having ineffective teachers over an extended period of time are daunting. (Haynes, 2014)

Darling-Hammond (1995) concludes that, “A major task for district leadership is to encourage and sustain reflective communities of practice both within and among schools and make resources available for teachers to use according to their needs and practices. Additionally, funding should be directed to towards teacher participation and learning. The problems of unequal educational funding contribute to the problems of teacher quality and distribution  (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011). According to Adamson (2011), states need to establish a base per-pupil funding that is representative of actual expenses for meeting achievement standards. Notably, the funding formula should be modified to account for cost-of-living differentials across large states as well as factor such as transportation and school construction into consideration. Adamson continues to suggest that ESEA resources should be allocated equally so that high-poverty states receive a fair share instead of favoring wealthier states. Allocation formulas can incorporate indicators of student need, with adjustments for cost-of-living differentials.

In a discussion about what could draw a National Board teacher to a high-needs school, a teacher said, “I would move (to a low-performing school), but I would want to see social services for parents and children, accomplished leadership, adequate resources
and facilities, and flexibility, freedom, and time.” (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011)

Teachers have the heart to serve children in high-needs schools, but they need the resources that would contribute to their success. Professional development is one of the most transformative elements that can be provided for teachers in school. Losen (2015) identified directions for broad policy change in saying,

> The research findings are relevant to improving civil rights law-enforcement policy, making more equitable decisions about education resource distribution, and improving access to experienced teachers. The findings might help policymakers use discipline data to more effectively flag and then target areas of need for earlier interventions to prevent dropouts and delinquency or to identify potential shortcomings in special education services. (p. 15)

**Role of the Principal**

The Gross and Herriott conception of leadership is based on the idea that an effective principal consistently seeks to improve the quality of the staff’s performance by demonstrating a high regard for instruction, supporting staff development, and discussing work with teachers (Bossert, 1982). Committed leaders who understand instruction and can cultivate the capacities of individuals and the school’s organization are key to improving student learning (Peterson, 2002 as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The foremost function of a principal is the leadership role in establishing an effective instructional program in the school (Brookover, 1982). The success of high-performing schools is attributed to strong administrative leadership, high expectations of students and staff, a safe and orderly school environment, a primary focus on learning, resources focused on achieving key objectives, regular monitoring of student learning progress, and instructional leadership on behalf of the principal (Cotton, 2003). Principals have the capacity to transform any school into an effective school if they adopt best
practices that promote the development of the staff and students. Leithwood, Montfomery and DeBoise (1999) found that principals of high-achieving schools establish and retain school-wide commitment to clearly stated learning goals and promote the goals throughout their school and communities (Cotton, 2003).

Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995) noted that effective discipline is attained by maintaining good order, enforcing fair, clear, and well-understood rules consistently, and using actual punishment infrequently (Cotton, 2003). Scheurich (1998) concluded that discipline cases are rare in high-achieving schools. Traditional discipline is not the focus. The focus is on embedding an understanding of proper behavior into the organizational structure of the school (Cotton, 2003). As noted by Johnson and Asera (1999), discipline problems became rare as schools integrated multi-faced approaches for teaching students to accept responsibility for their own behavior. The schools created an environment in which students were supported in learning and behaving well (Cotton, 2003).

**Effective Schooling**

Successful schools contain a school climate that is conducive to learning, school-wide focus on instruction, a common expectation of success, and clear objectives for monitoring and assessing student performance (Bossert, 1982). An effective learning climate refers to the qualities and patterns of attitudes, beliefs, norms, role definitions, structure, and instructional behaviors that are associated with achieving success (Brookover, 1982). Students can be socialized into the student role through instruction and modeling (Brophy, 1986). It is imperative that teachers demonstrate consistency in demands and compliance, but it is most important for the students to be fully aware of the
expectations at all times. Students are likely to abide by rules that they understand and agree with (Good, 2008). Students want to feel respected and they want their teachers to create safe and orderly learning environments that will help them become successful (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006).

Effective teaching is closely tied to the collective values of the school. Classrooms involve learning self-reliance and self-evaluation to work collaboratively with others. Additionally, classrooms are a place that provides an opportunity to learn more about personal identity, culture, and issues of fairness and morality (Jackson & Hansen, 1995). Effective classroom managers use careful analysis of the rules and procedures, state the rules and procedures in student friendly language so that the students can understand them, teach the rules and procedures at the beginning of the school year and as new courses are introduced, and monitor student compliance continuously and maintain accurate records of student academic work (Acheson, 1997).

Kounin (1970) was the first to identify the elements of achieving high levels of student engagement in effective classrooms. The successes of the effective managers were not in the manner in which they responded to disruptive behavior. Instead, it was noted that the effective teachers had structures in place to minimize the occurrences of inattention and disruption. The teachers were proactive and prevented problems from occurring in the first place. Kounin (1970) and Jones (1970) emphasize that the distinction between effective and ineffective classroom managers is the implementation of strategies that promote a positive learning atmosphere and discourage inattention, talking, and disruptive behavior from becoming larger issues (Brookover, 1982). Brookover (1982) continues to state that the actions teachers take prior to the occurrence
of a problem controls the level of discipline and distinguishes good classroom managers from poor classroom managers.

Teachers who are unprepared to teach a lesson or overreact to minor misbehavior are often ineffective managers (Brophy, 1986). Research evidence shows that educationally oriented strategies and positive learning environments account for better behavior and stronger discipline (Brookover, 1982). Good (2008) concludes that

…teachers who approach management as a process of establishing and maintaining an effective learning environment are more successful than teachers who emphasize their roles as disciplinarians. Teachers are authority figures and need to require students to follow certain rules and procedures. However, these are means for organizing the classroom to support teaching and learning, not ends in themselves. (p. 72)

Effective classroom management contributes to a teacher’s sense of well-being.

Difficulties in managing classrooms is related to teacher anxiety and stress which can lead to depression and teacher burnout if prolonged. (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Emmer & Gerwels, 2006; Friedman, 2006). Marzano & Marzano (2003) argue that good personal relationships with the students is critical to effective classroom management. Therefore, teachers should model attitudes and personal traits that make them someone who the students can like and respect (Good, 2008). Students aim to please their teachers when they like and respect them. Additionally, students are more likely to duplicate their teacher’s behavior, adopt their attitudes, and sympathize with the teachers instead of allying with disruptive students (Good, 2008).

DuBois (1935) addresses several elements that are key to effective classroom management, including teacher student relationships, efficacy, and high performance expectations for students.
The following quote is from W.E.B. Dubois’ 1935 essay on Black education.

The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, and on the basis of perfect social equality, as will increase this sympathy and knowledge; facilities for education in equipment and housing, and the promotion of such extracurricular activities as will tend to induct the child into life.

**Teacher Efficacy**

Teachers’ belief in their instructional efficacy influences the manner in which academic activities are structured in their classrooms. Also, teachers with high levels of efficacy are confident in their ability to manage their students with persuasive means rather than authoritarian control. Such teachers support development of their students’ intrinsic interest and academic self-directedness (Bandura, 1998). Positive behavior management allows the teacher to control the students without exercising punitive discipline practices.

Over the years, researchers have conducted studies to measure teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy to motivate and educate difficult students (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe that difficult students can be taught and that extra effort and proper techniques can be used to help the students overcome negative community influences (Bandura, 1998). On the contrary, teachers with low efficacy do not believe there is much they can do if students are unmotivated. Hence, the perpetuation of the assumption that African American students are intellectually inferior to their white peers. These teachers think their influence on a student’s intellectual capacity is stifled by unsupportive or oppositional influential factors from the home and surrounding environment (Bandura, 1998). The stronger a teacher’s self efficacy, the
greater their ability go promote mastery and incredible learning experiences for their students. Self doubt allows teachers to create learning environments that undermine students’ judgments of their ability and cognitive development (Bandura, 1998). The same is so amongst pre-service teachers. Teachers with increased efficacy are able to create stronger lesson plans.

Melby (1995) notes that teachers with low self-efficacy have an abundance of problems in their classroom. They lack confidence in their ability to manage their classrooms, feel stressed by students’ misbehavior, lack optimism in students’ improvability, and focus more on the subject matter than student development (Bandura, 1998). Such teachers would not choose teaching as a profession if they had the option to start all over again. Teaching is more involved than the transmission of academic information. The effectiveness of a teacher is measured by one’s ability to manage a classroom, enlist resources and parent involvement, and counteract external influences that can potentially suppress students’ interest in academic pursuits (Bandura, 1998).

**Performance Expectations**

Teachers should be expected to help every student attain high achievement. Bloom (1976) concludes that “what any person in the world can learn, almost all persons can learn if provided with appropriate prior and current conditions of learning.” (p.7) The appropriate conditions for learning are identified as the learning climate in effective schools (Brookover, 1982). Belief that teachers and schools cannot maintain good discipline is simply a myth. The myths create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

1.) Those kids (low achieving, low SES, minority, the emotionally disturbed) are different. 2.) Children in general are uncontrollable because of the permissiveness of society. 3.) Parents are no longer supportive of the schools. 4.) Parents cannot control their own children. 5.) Court cases,
giving due process to students, have tied the hands of the schools. 6.)
Teacher training institutions do not deal adequately with the problem.
(Brookover, 1982, p. 176)

Beliefs such as these cause teachers to believe that nothing they do makes a difference. Their expectations for students become depleted.

When the individual student and family background are used as explanations of student learning, the influence of the school leaders and teachers who interact with the students are ignored. In actuality, all students can learn (Bloom, 1976). Effective schools require a student population who believes that they can learn. Confidence in student success is critical to achievement. Brookover (1982) adds that belief and confidence in the students is not enough to produce learning. Positive beliefs, norms, and expectations, must be accompanied by “a school social organization that defines learning as desirable and rewards effective teaching as well as successful learning.” (Brookover, 1982, p 4) In Bartell’s (1990) study of “outstanding secondary principals” she noted that, “An effective school has a positive school climate. Students feel good about attending such a school and teachers feel good about teaching there. The entire staff works together to foster a caring attitude. (p. 126)

Teaching is difficult. Teachers and students deal with crowds, complexity and power. Jackson (1968) contends that classroom decision-making becomes complicated because of the complexity of the environments in which teachers make decisions quickly with limited information. Doyle (1986, 2006) presented four dimensions that frame teaching and learning: 1) Multidimentonality 2) Simultaneity 3) Immediacy 4) Unpredictable and public classroom climate. Teachers are responsible for a variety of tasks that can have varied outcomes. Brophy (1996) lists teaching functions as
instruction, classroom management, disciplinary interventions, and student socialization. Teachers must possess knowledge and strategies for meeting the needs of the students in order to help them achieve academic growth as well as foster the social-emotional needs of the students.

Teachers are not source of the problems in education, but they should be regarded as part of the solution to educational problems (Glickman, 1989). Teachers should be granted more control and influence over events and decisions that affect them. Teacher empowerment, shared governance, or participative decision making require educational leaders who consider their school’s readiness, their personal philosophy, and their leadership behavior (Blase, 1994).

**PBIS**

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework designed to address social behavior and academic outcomes of students by “(a) emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence based behavioral practices; and (b) organizing resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity” (Sugai and Simonsen, 2012). Sugai (2000) defines PBIS as “a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students.” Characteristics of PBIS include student outcomes, evidence and research based practices that characterize packaged programs, a continuum of behavior support practices and systems, and the use of data or information to guide decision-making. (Sugai, 2012)
PBIS implementation requires participation from administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, students, parents and every other member of the school community. Active leadership is established with the formation of management and implementation teams that provide professional development, coaching, and evaluative processes for school staff. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) The teams include administrators, clinicians, and teachers. After creating a plan for the school, the program is rolled out in phases. Facets of tier one intervention and supports are introduced gradually. Then, tier two and tier three interventions and supports are incorporated as they are needed and when all of the appropriate resources and supports are in place.

There are seven core principals of PBIS: (a) We can effectively teach appropriate behavior to all children (b) Intervene early (c) Use a multi-tier model of service delivery (d) Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions to the extent available (e) Monitor student progress to inform interventions (f) Use data to make decisions (g) Use assessment for three different purposes 1) screening of data comparison per day per month for total office discipline referrals, 2) diagnostic determination of data, 3) progress monitoring to determine if the behavioral interventions are producing the desired effects. (OESP, 2016)

Conclusion

Schools that serve the disadvantaged are often plagued with discipline problems, violence, poor attendance, and low achievement and failure to attain basic literacy skills. Such problems are not exclusive to schools that serve students of color and low-income students, but they are so prevalent in these schools that the accepted view has become schools are unable to overcome them (Brookover, 1982). Bandura (1998) notes, “The
major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, efficacy, beliefs, and intrinsic interests needed to educate themselves in a variety of pursuits throughout their lifetime.” (p 214) Students may forget aspects of the content they learned while in school, but the self-development and interpersonal effects endure throughout their lives.

The body of literature on classroom management and student discipline is growing rapidly. The data supports changes in teacher preparation and professional development in classroom management. Currently, minority and low-income students are being punished at disproportional rates. The outcomes of the punitive practices can potentially ruin the students’ futures and damage their communities. Enhanced student management practices and procedures can improve the learning environment for students and teachers.
CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to examine perspectives of school administrators, coaches and teachers regarding the benefits and costs of continuous teacher development/coaching in relation to classroom management and student discipline. The main research question asks if the benefits of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports outweigh the cost of the program. Additional research questions include: how can professional development/coaching be improved and what is the principal’s role in developing the classroom management skills of teachers.

Qualitative Methodology

This study utilizes qualitative research methodology. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research by saying

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. (p 3)

This particular research study fits within the scope of qualitative research because of the potential variety of perceptions from the teachers and administrators who participate in the study. According to Clark & Cresswell (2010) qualitative research relies on the views of the participants, examines data for themes, and incorporates a subjective and reflexive manner. Teachers can potentially have a variety of perspectives, just as the
administrators can. The essence of their perspectives and experiences can be more appropriately captured by a qualitative design.

Rossman (2003) describes five characteristics of qualitative research (a) takes place in the natural world, (b) uses natural methods, (c) focuses on context, (d) is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and (e) is fundamentally interpretive. Participants in this research project were allowed to remain in a setting that was comfortable for them. They determined whether they would be interviewed in their classroom, office, or an alternate location. Interviews allowed the participants to talk about their experiences and express their thoughts in their own words. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and hand-written notes will be taken to record vocal cues, body language, hesitation to responses, and any other non-verbal cues that may occur.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted so that the questions could vary for the participants depending on the direction in which the participant went with the responses. During the interviews, follow-up questions and probes varied according to the initial responses of the participants. Each participant was interviewed individually, but the responses of the participants were not studied independently. All of the interview results were ultimately combined with the responses of other participants as the I coded the interview transcripts and unveiled themes.

Interview data was interpreted in a thoughtful, ethical, and politically astute manner (Van Maanen, 1988). The interview transcripts were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Interview participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcript and provide any corrections, if any. Work email addresses were used for initial
contact. The interview participants were allowed to provide an alternate email dress for further communication. I did not want to send the interview transcripts to the participants’ work email address as a method of further protecting their privacy. NVivo was used to assist with coding to generate increased accuracy. However, I coded the transcripts by hand as well.

Pseudonyms were used in place of any information that could be used to jeopardize the confidentiality of the participants and reveal their identities. Participant names, schools, school district, and grades were all replaced with pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The identity of the participants was protected in accordance with the guarantees of the Institutional Review Board.

**Phenomenology**

The basic purpose of a phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence a “Grasp of the very nature of the thing.” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Phenomenology allows the researcher to enter the world of individuals and understand their perspectives (Slavin, 2007). Phenomenology was selected as the method of research because it is best used with the researcher desires to comprehensively describe the essence of an experience of the participants that are being studied (Patton, 2001). According to Moustakas (1994), “In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted.” (p. 94) This research project provides an interpretation of the perspectives of school administrators, coaches, and teachers regarding ongoing teacher development/coaching.

A phenomenological study describes the perspectives of several people of their lived experiences, a concept, or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In a phenomenological
study, the researcher interprets the meanings of the experiences of the participants who are involved (Slavin, 2007). The focus is on describing what all participants have in common as they experience the phenomenon (Cresswell, 2013). Phenomenologists look for patterns and commonalities in their participants’ perceptions of their experiences and report on the essence of the phenomenon (Slavin, 2007).

Phenomenologists strive to ignore their preconceived ideas about a phenomenon and try to analyze and describe and analyze the thoughts and feelings that their participants have experienced (Schwant, 2001). Therefore, phenomenologists do not report objective truth. Instead, they report their interpretation of reality which is used to understand the phenomenon better (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The unstructured interview is the most common form of data used in phenomenology. The in-depth interview attempts to capture the perspectives of various participants in the phenomenon of interest (Slavin, 2007). Interviews can be lengthy and they can be quite conversational in nature. The researcher converses with the participant and takes note of clues that indicate issues that are important for the participant (Slavin, 2007).

Typically, 5-20 participants are selected in order to provide a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon. The researcher aims to identify common themes that appear in the participants’ interviews. Phenomenology allows the researcher to determine whether there are patterns in the responses. The patterns can be used to generate hypothesis regarding the phenomenon which can inspire further research (Slavin, 2007).
**Interviews**

As noted by Fontana & Frey (2007), “Interviewing is inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound. (p. 695) The key to interviews is that the active nature of the process leads to a contextually bound and mutually created story. Interviewing is more than asking questions and getting answers. Kong and colleagues (2002) concluded that the interview is bound in historical, political, and cultural moments. Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful methods used to understand humans. According to Fontana & Frey (2007), “The focus of interviews is moving to encompass the hows of people’s lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life) as well as the traditional whats (the activities of everyday life).” (p. 698)

Interviews are relied upon in qualitative research as well as quantitative research for gathering data whether the purpose is to obtain a rich, in-depth account of an event or to get a point on a scale of 2 to 10 dimensions. During a qualitative interview, the researcher asks one or more participants in general, open-ended questions and records their answers (Cresswell, 2008). Open-ended questions allow the participant to share their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. The participant actually creates the options for responding (Cresswell, 2008). Faith is ensued in regards to the trustworthiness and accuracy of the results as well as that the interviewer had not biased the account (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 1993).

The results of the study are contingent upon the type of interview selected, the techniques used, and the ways that information is recorded. The researcher has a great deal of influence over what data will be reported and the manner in which the data will be
Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in the interaction with participants. Interviews are negotiated accomplishments of the interviewer and participants; they are shaped by the situations and contexts in which they occur (Fontana & Frey, 2005). As noted by Holstein & Gubrium (1995), “Interviewers with less training and experience than social scientists might not recognize when interview participants are “actively” constructing knowledge around questions and responses. (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 699 )

The researcher begins the interview by breaking the ice with general questions and advances to more specific questions while also asking questions intended to measure the reliability of the respondents’ statements (Fontana & Prokos, 2007). The researcher should maintain a tone of friendliness while remaining close to the guidelines of the topics of inquiry. Nonverbal techniques are important in interviewing also. Gordon (1980) identifies four basic modes of nonverbal communication:

(a) Proxemic communication is the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes (b) Chronemic communication is the use of pacing of speech and length of silence in conversation (c) Kinesic communication includes any body movements or posture (d) Paralinguistic communication includes all the variations in volume, pitch, and quality of voice. (p 335)

The researcher should note the use of the modes because interview data involves much more than verbal records. Nonverbal features of the interaction are very significant.

The researcher should take extreme care to avoid any harm to the human participants. Ethical concerns have been raised regarding the concepts of informed consent, the right to privacy, and protection from physical, emotional, or any other kind of harm (Denzin & London, 2005). The well-being of the participant should not be compromised as the result of participating in the study. Ethical concerns can be
addressed by being transparent with the research participant during the recruitment process and protecting the privacy of the participant at all times. Pseudonyms provide anonymity for the participants by changing the names of participants as well as any additional details that could make the participant easily identifiable.

**Data Collection**

The process of data collection began with the selection of a school district. The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports website was utilized to identify schools where the coaching is implemented within a particular region. Next, the state’s school report cards were analyzed to determine if the school district had at least 50% African American students enrolled. Additionally, the school district was required to have at least 50% of students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch. This was to ensure that the population of students at the school included students who are typically marginalized by punitive disciplinary practices.

A Midwestern public school district was selected as the site for this research project. The district serves students approximately 5,000 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. There are 4 elementary schools, a K-6 magnet school, a sixth grade center, a seventh and eighth grade magnet school, and a four-year high school. Research was conducted in three of the four elementary schools.

Participants were selected via purposeful sampling. When purposeful sampling is used, “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Cresswell, 2005, p. 205). Patton (1990) identifies the standard in selecting participants and sites as the extent of information richness. Contact information was retrieved from the school district’s website. The PBIS Coordinator was sent a copy of my recruitment letter via email. The PBIS Coordinator scheduled a telephone
conference in which the research project’s purpose and design were discussed. After his review, the proposal was forwarded to the school board for approval. Following approval, the PBIS coordinator sent my project recruitment letter the elementary school principals, PBIS coaches, and teachers within the school district.

I selected teacher participants who had at least two years of experience as a full-time teacher; this was to verify that the teachers could have students and experiences to reflect on as well as discuss their performance as a teacher at different points in time. Researchers may pose this request as a question during an interview or through informal conversations with individuals at a research site (Cresswell, 2005). Participants suggested additional participants after they were interviewed. This was extremely helpful. I learned that teachers were hesitant to speak with me because they did not feel comfortable meeting with an outsider.

The desired number of participants was 5 administrators and 5 teachers. Typically, between 5 and 20 participants are carefully selected to provide a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon (Slavin, 2007). The actual pool of participants included 9 participants: 1 district-wide PBIS coordinator, 1 principal, 2 PBIS school coaches, and 5 teachers from 3 of the elementary schools in the school district.

Each participant was interviewed individually. The participants selected the location and the time of the interview. All of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ offices or classrooms. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes depending on the depth of the responses. I was extremely mindful of the participants’ time and I orchestrated the interviews in a manner that was friendly and conversational, but focused on the topic of the research. A data recording protocol was used to record
information during the interview (Cresswell, 2005). The researcher designs an interview protocol and it contains interview instructions, a list of questions, and space to take notes of responses (Cresswell, 2005). The questions were used as a guide, not a script; the interviews were semi-structured, allowing the participants and the researcher freedom to formulate questions and responses as the conversation progressed.

Each interview was recorded with a digital voice recorder. Participants were asked for their permission to have the interviews recorded. Participants would not be allowed to participate in the study if they did not consent to recording. There were not any objections to using my recorder. Audio recording ensures that the researcher captures all of the verbal responses during the interview. I kept written record of nonverbal cues including body language, intonation, hesitation or excitement to respond, and other aspects of communication during the interview. The interviews were transcribed within a week of the date of the interview.

**Data Analysis**

Patton (2002) argues that, “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes, but no recipe. Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when – and if – arrived at” (p. 432). Six steps are commonly used when analyzing qualitative data (Cresswell, 2008). The first step is to prepare and organize the data for analysis. Next, the researcher will engage in an initial exploration of the data by coding it. The codes will help the researcher develop a more general picture of the data. Then, the researcher will represent the findings through narratives and visuals. The researcher should interpret the meaning of the results by reflecting on the impact of the findings and
on the literature that might inform them. Finally, the researcher will implement strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings (Cresswell, 2008).

Each interview was transcribed within a week of the interview date. Participant names and any identifying information were changed to pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The key to the pseudonyms is kept in an encrypted file. The text from the transcriptions was imported into NVivo, a computer program that assists with coding qualitative data.

The process of coding began with reading every transcript. Coding involves segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data (Cresswell, 2008). Initially, I found an overwhelming number of codes. However, subsequent analyses helped me reduce the codes to four major themes by eliminating redundancies. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming (Cresswell, 2008).

Lichtman’s (2006) six step process for reducing data was implemented. An initial list of codes was created. The initial coding was revised. Then an initial list of categories or central ideas was drafted. Next, the initial list was modified. Next, I revisited the categories and subcategories. The categories became concepts. Finally, I identified themes that gave meaning to the collected data.

**Validation**

Cresswell (2000) defines validity using Swantd’s (1997) definition, “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them. (p. 124). Validation in qualitative research receives scrutiny as replicability, testing hypotheses, and objective procedures are not common terms in the vocabularies of qualitative researchers. (Cho & Trent, 2006) Cresswell (2000) notes that
the lens utilized by qualitative researchers is not based on scores, instruments, or research designs. Instead, it is comprised of the views of the researcher, participants, or those who review a study.

Cresswell (2000) describes lenses that can be used to determine the validity of a research study. The first lens is the lens of the researcher. Researchers have the liberty to determine the length of time for fieldwork, the required amount of data collection for establishing themes or categories, as well as how the data analysis evolves to become a persuasive narrative. (Cresswell, 2000) The second lens used to by researchers is the participants in the study. “The qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be.” (Cresswell, 2000, p. 125) Therefore, it is important to check the accuracy of the representation of the realities of the participants.

**Triangulation**
Participants with different roles in the schools were interviewed to provide different perspectives. A district level administrator, school principal, two classroom management coaches, and five teachers participated in individual interviews. Their voices are based on their experience with student behavior management, classroom management, professional development, and coaching.

Member checking was used to verify the accuracy of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to member checking as “the most crucial technique” for establishing credibility in a study (p. 314). Member checking is the process of providing data and interpretations to the participants in the study so that they can confirm that the narrative and the information are credible. Every participant received a transcript of the interview.
to review and confirm accuracy of the typed text. Additionally, the participants had an opportunity to provide additional insight and information as they deemed fit.

**Ethical Considerations**

The research participants were treated in accordance to the ethical guidelines of the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board. The privacy of the participants is held in high regard. Every measure will be taken to achieve anonymity for the participants. I will not share identifying information about the participants. Laws and university rules might require me to tell certain people about the participants. For example, records from this research may be seen or copied by representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board and Office for Protection of Research Subjects, other representatives of the state and university responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research, federal government regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services.

Pseudonyms were used in place of any identifying information. The electronic file containing real names and pseudonyms are kept in a password-protected file on a computer that is password protected as well. I am the only person with access to the file. The key will be destroyed following the final dissertation deposit of the research project. Identifying information will never be published in any form.

**Reflexivity**

Fontana (2004) describes reflexivity as one of the pillars of critical qualitative research as it addresses the influence of the researcher on the findings (Jotoon et al, 2009). According to Primeau (2003), “Reflexivity enhances the quality of research through its ability to extend our understanding of how our positions and interest as
researchers affect all stages of the research process.” I believe my identity as a Black woman and teacher affected the findings of this study.

Initial contact with the school district was made via a telephone call and email. The first group of interviewees were recruited through emails. Additional participants were identified by the snowballing method. Teachers referred me to potential participants after meeting me. The principal, a coach, and three of the teachers were Black women. The principal did not respond to my initial email invitation. She agreed to participate in the interview after meeting me in passing in her school. Fifty percent of the interviews were conducted with Black women in a school district that is staffed by mostly White women.

During the interviews, the participants deterred from discussing the race of the students directly, but they used language to suggest that they were talking about Black students at times. For example, they described a lot of the troubled behavior as stemming from the influx of student transfers from certain neighborhoods in the major city that are almost if not completely occupied by Black people. Additionally, the interview participants would use phrases like “you know what I mean” and “you know how it is” to affirm their responses. On the contrary, it felt like the White participants were afraid to discuss race in order to protect their status as a good teacher. White participants were very delicate in describing students and their behaviors. If a student was described for misbehavior, the White respondents would follow up their statement by saying something like, “kids will be kids.”

I identified myself as a teacher during my introduction to the interview participants. I hoped this would make the participants more comfortable and help them
open up to me, but it seems as if it hindered the depth of information shared during the interviews. The participants assumed that I already knew their responses. Therefore, I needed to ask follow-up questions to get interviewees to provide more in-depth responses. I realized that I needed to use phrases such as “In your opinion”, “What do you think about”, and “What is your experience with?” I shifted the focus away from me and emphasized the significance of their perspectives as participants.

It is natural for me to compare and contrast educational outcomes with my personal experience as an educator. There were moments during the interviews when I had to catch myself and avoid sharing too much about my experiences with students. My social personality and passion for teaching could have allowed the interviews to go on for hours, but I was intentional during the interviews and stepped outside of my role as a teacher to become a researcher. There were similar moments for me during the data analysis process. I needed to constantly remind myself to think about what the transcripts said. I read the transcripts several times to confirm that my writing reflected the perspectives of the research participants, not my own.

**Role and Background of the Researcher**

I have nearly 8 years of professional experience in urban education. Whenever I reflect on my early experiences as a teacher, my attention is almost immediately drawn to the urgency behind getting a grip on classroom management. I earned teacher certification through an accelerated graduate program. I only had one semester of student teaching before I began teaching in a classroom of my own. To make matters more interesting, my student teaching experience was in a gifted third grade classroom of a school located in one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the city. My first full-time
teaching position was in a setting that contrasted starkly to that my student teaching experience. I learned that classroom management was critical to my success as a teacher.

I believed that my first group of students was smart and talented. I was confident that their behavior could improve if I learned strategies for managing my classroom. Classroom management was only briefly mentioned in my graduate studies. I must acknowledge the fact that I did not have great interest in classroom management as a graduate student. The students I served as a student teacher did not demonstrate issues with behavior. Therefore, I never imagined that classroom management would be a problem for me. I was unaware of the special dynamics of students in a selective enrollment gifted program. Those students had additional pressure to comply with the rules in order to hold their seat in the program.

When I became a full-time teacher, there were days when I felt like quitting because of the level of exhaustion that took over my body by the end of the school day. On top of that, my students were not achieving the academic goals that I know they could achieve. I did not feel adequate as a teacher and I did not want to do it anymore. I never approached my principal regarding my feelings because I did not want to appear to be a failure and/or receive disciplinary consequences. My colleagues did not seem to notice that I was struggling, so I never reached out to them neither. I continued the façade of pretending to be a good teacher for months until I accepted that I needed to improve my pedagogical practice for the sake of my students. I was denying my students of their guarantee to a quality public education every single day that I did not give them a superior experience in my classroom.
The school principal provided professional development on many topics, but classroom management was never a topic. I became my own classroom management coach and I found books and articles that discussed strategies for classroom management. I implemented classroom management strategies one at a time so that I could determine the level of effectiveness for each strategy. Some of them required modifications to suit my personality as well as the personalities of my students. Over time, my classroom seemed to change. I actually loved being a teacher. My students were more relaxed and comfortable in the classroom. They could focus on learning and I could focus on teaching. Next, the academic performance of my students improved; it was wonderful.

My experience with classroom management improved as the result of my personal initiative to seek out knowledge. Such is not necessarily a common occurrence in schools across the country. I have witnessed students suffer consequences for behavioral incidents that would not have occurred if the teacher had better classroom management skills. Classroom management is not an isolated issue for novice teachers. I know seasoned teachers who have challenges with classroom management. Sadly, they do not seek assistance or coaching. They blame the behavior on the students and their home environments. It is a poisonous cycle because the teachers do not seek assistance with classroom management out of fear that it will help their administrator identify their weakness and hold it against them when evaluations are completed.

As a beginning teacher, I did know that I would become a scholar of educational policy and focus on classroom management. All I knew was that I wanted to make a positive difference in the lives of students in the inner-city as an educator. Today, I am extremely passionate about classroom management and student discipline because of the
exponential outcomes that have long-term effects on the lives of students. I believe that a classroom environment that is conducive to learning can transform the academic performance of students in any neighborhood and from any environment. Additionally, the well-being of teachers is connected to classroom management. Teachers have an increasing load of administrative tasks to complete without any signs of relief coming in the immediate future.

This research project gave me an opportunity to expand my knowledge on a topic that I am extremely passionate about. I have an outlet from which I can contribute to an existing body of knowledge as a scholar, learn to become a better teacher, prepare for experiences that I may encounter as a future administrator, and help improve instructional conditions for teachers and students.
CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will begin with a brief review of the data sources for this study. Data sources include semi-structured interviews with a school district administrator, a school principal, two PBIS coaches, and five elementary school teachers. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes and sought to answer the research question: What are the perceptions of administrators, coaches, and teachers regarding the benefits and costs of teacher development/coaching in relation to classroom management and student discipline?

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of school staff members concerning the costs and benefits of teacher professional development and coaching related to classroom management. Classroom management is a major component of the first tier of PBIS. Teachers receive supports and coaching that contribute to a pleasant and productive learning environment. Such a learning environment is expected to produce positive learning interactions and result in few to no disciplinary referrals. Students of color are streamlined in the school to prison pipeline as a result of punitive and exclusionary discipline practices. There is a desperate need to explore alternative options.

This research study was conducted in an urban school district located approximately 50 miles away from the largest school district in the state. The student and staff demographics are similar to those of the largest school district in that a staff of mostly White women teach a student population that is comprised of a majority of African American low-income students. Black students comprise 63% of the student
population in the school district where this study was conducted. 89% of the teachers are White and 80% of the teachers are women. The research participants included 1 White man (school district administrator/ PBIS coordinator), 3 White women (1 coach and 2 teachers), and 5 Black women (1 principal, 1 coach, and 3 teachers).

The school district level administrator, Mr. Smith, is a White man who has worked in the district as an administrator for approximately 4 years. He has nearly 10 years of experience in the field of education and has become an expert on school-wide discipline practices with an emphasis on PBIS. His role as the PBIS Coordinator is to oversee the implementation of PBIS in every school within the district and to coach the school’s internal coaches. Every school building has at least one PBIS coach.

The principal, Mrs. Franklin, is a Black woman. She has 2 years experience as a principal, 3 years of experience as an assistant principal, and she taught prior to becoming a school administrator. Mrs. Franklin has an active role on the PBIS team and is very involved in the implementation of PBIS at her school.

The PBIS coaches contributed different perspectives to the study. One of them is a White woman who has two years of experience as a PBIS coach and 4 years experience teaching. The other PBIS coach is a Black woman in her fourth year of coaching and she works in social services. She does not have a teaching background.

The five teachers interviewed for this study include 3 Black women and two White women. The teachers have taught for a range of four to ten years in a public school. The majority of the teachers have taught in the same district for most of their teaching career, if not their entire teaching career. Therefore, they could speak to the school district’s environment prior to the implementation of PBIS.
In summary, the answer to the research question was that the benefits of PBIS coaching outweigh the costs of implementing the program in the schools. Coaching and teacher development requires extra work and dedication from all parties who are involved, but it has resulted in a significant decrease of discipline referrals and the teachers are able to deliver higher quality instruction. Data analysis resulted in four themes that spoke to the perception that the benefits of ongoing teacher development/coaching outweigh the costs. The participants emphasized the significance of (a) supportive environment; (b) buy-in; (c) fidelity; and (d) language in coaching and ongoing teacher development. Despite the increased efforts required to implement new strategies, those elements helped make the coaching successful in the schools. Therefore, the participants believe that the benefits of coaching outweigh the cost. Each of the themes will be discussed in detail to demonstrate the perspectives of the participants.

**Supportive Environment**

PBIS was introduced in the Drexel School District #108 as an initiative of the current superintendent nearly four years ago. The superintendent was committed to devoting resources towards improving the behavioral climate within the schools of the district. PBIS was selected as a research based program to be used to address the 8204 discipline referrals that were written across the district each year as well as the 4000 total days of out of school suspension. A district coordinator was hired and the principals and school staff were trained on the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The principals identified members for the PBIS teams and the program was implemented.

Although PBIS was rolled out as top-down initiative of the superintendent, the interviewees identified the supportive school environment as one of the main contributors
to the success of PBIS. The PBIS coaches strive to support the teachers with a positive approach. Overall, the teachers respond positively to the advice received from the coaches. One of the teachers identified her relationship with the coach as being related to her relationship with her as a classroom teacher. Ms. Smith referred to Ms. Lee’s commitment to her students and the environment of her classroom as a teacher and trusted that she could help her do a better job with classroom management. Additionally, Ms. Smith described Ms. Lee as knowledgeable, approachable, and well organized. Ms. Smith thinks Ms. Lee is very supportive of the teachers in the building.

She’s like a cheerleader, the school cheerleader. That’s what I call her because she gets everyone, the students, the teachers, everybody buys into the mission of making our school better so that we can be successful, so to speak… She’s really good at keeping the buy-in level of the teachers and students very high.

Ms. Adams described her role as “… I am the facilitator. We have such an awesome team. We’re so lucky for that.” The coach meets with the PBIS team monthly and shares information with teachers following every meeting so that they are involved in the PBIS in the school. The teachers know what goes on in the meetings and what is expected of them at all times.

The coaches create a supportive environment by presenting advice to the teachers instead of telling them what they have to do by delivering mandates. Therefore, the teachers feel respected and valued by their coaches. Each month, the coaches meet with their PBIS team to analyze school-wide behavior data to determine areas of need. Next, they discuss strategies that would be successful for helping the students achieve improvement in those areas. The PBIS coaches write lessons for the teachers to use during Social Emotional Learning time as well as identify strategies that will help the
teachers address student behaviors. The coaches are able to say things like, “I noticed that there’s an increase in physical aggression. Have you tried this with your scholars?” or the coaches can ask “What do you think about doing it this way?” None of the teachers complained about their relationship with their coach.

The schools adhere to an open door policy that gives teachers access to the coaches and the administrators at almost any time. The teachers feel comfortable approaching the administrators or coaches if they are experiencing a challenge or feel that they need support in an area. They do not have to wait until there have an urgent need; they can always approach an administrator. The teachers have a high level of respect for the administrators; they are not intimidated by them. Their positive relationships help them collaborate and support the needs of the students. Therefore, the principals and coaches are able to support the teachers without avoidance.

The principal and coaches meet weekly to discuss the culture and what’s going on the school. During this time, they discuss classrooms that need interventions and individual scholars who need interventions and what they can put in place for them. This is helpful because the principals and coaches are already abreast of areas of concern when they are sought out for assistance. The coaches are very accessible for the teachers and they are available for advice, skill building, and they are even available to teach social emotional lessons to the students. Coaches conduct informal observations, but teachers prefer to be observed by administrators.

The school community appears to be sincerely concerned about the well-being of the students. According to Principal Franklin, “The culture and climate of the school is very positive with all staff included and with all of [the] scholars” at her school. On the
school surveys, this is their number one area where they get pretty much get a score of 95-100%. This supportive environment is achieved by giving all stakeholders a meaningful role in the success of the students.

The number one thing we have going for us is school culture. With that in place, whatever is asked, the staff is willing to participate. It’s not just the teachers, it’s the paraprofessionals. We get every staff member involved. Our lunchroom supervisors, our lunchroom food service staff, our mentors… so everyone is involved and feel like they have a hand in our scholars’ success. –Principal Franklin

The district acknowledges the impact of the administrators, teachers, instructional aides, bus drivers and monitors, janitors, lunchroom staff members, and parent volunteers. Everyone is expected to play an active role. For example, the schools utilize school money as an incentive for positive student behavior. All adults have school money to disperse to the scholars in the school. Also, the entire school staff receives training on PBIS, receives PBIS newsletters, and has the support of the PBIS coach. Classroom management coaching is expanded to school behavior management.

**Buy-In**

Staff and student buy-in are critical to the success of PBIS coaching in the Drexel Public Schools. Almost everyone in the schools follows the guidelines of PBIS in strict compliance. However, it has not always been that way. Principal Franklin described her experience with PBIS

I would say the buy-in wasn’t easy when we got started, but since the initiative came from the superintendent it had a trickle effect. It wasn’t I’ll say, an option. Because it was district wide that was very helpful in terms of any additional resistance. It is a lot of work and requires a lot of data, a lot of reporting, a lot of keeping up with your scholars. We had teachers who didn’t believe in the you get to move up and even if you make a poor choice, you get to make that up. At some point in the day, you have that opportunity for change. Some teachers do just want to make it punitive.
For example, you made this infraction so you should be punished all day and not have an opportunity to do better.

Ms. Lee, a PBIS coach, acknowledged the significance of the buy-in of the administrators. The staff would not respond to the urgency of the PBIS initiative if the administrators did not make the success of the program a priority in the building.

I mean, PBIS would not be possible without administration’s buy-in majorly. They are the most important part of this… and then without an awesome team, which we have… without the staff buying in and I’m talking about the entire staff… You really need all hands on deck for this program to work. Am I gonna say our school is perfect? Absolutely not! We still have behavior issues, but every school has that.

Teachers reported that they participate because the program works. Evidence is in the data. From the 2011 school year to the 2014 school year, office discipline referrals in the district were reduced from 9,284 to 4,955 and out of school suspension days declined from 3,997 to 1,575 days. Staff members witnessed a change in the numbers and they could feel the increased calmness in the schools.

In our classroom, we have the seven-step behavior model where when there’s an inappropriate behavior or bad behavior, a non-compliant behavior, they move their clip down for it. There’s a chance to move the clip back up and you’re rewarded for good behavior. We have behavior bucks, and we have prizes for when students move their clip to great job, they get to choose from the prize bucket and they are able to get free choice time. They can play in the dramatic play area or they can have time on the Chromebooks. They love it! There’s total buy-in and when the clips are on orange… if they get to clip back up it’s like “Yes, I get to clip back up!” But if someone stays on orange it’s like “Oooooooooooooooohhh!” –Ms Smith, First grade teacher

Buy-in is evident in students at all grade levels. As for the behavior bucks, the school stores are stocked with items that are appropriate for various grade levels. Older students save up the most bucks so that they can purchase big-ticket items. They want to save for the Game Stop gift card, a bike, or another large item. Also, they beam with
pride from knowing that they achieved a behavior goal and they were able to see improvement.

Buy-in worked in many directions administration to teachers, teachers to students, and even students to teachers.

The kids’ buy-in got me involved. They are so excited about the coins and getting prizes. And I was like I need this to help me make it through the next day. Seeing them buy in, I was like oh, this works! They love tool time, going to the store, buying prizes. It just works! The kids are just buying into the whole thing, as corny as it is. As a teacher, it makes you want to do a little more and invest your time and stuff like that because they enjoy it. – Ms. Smith, First grade teacher

Teachers acknowledge the positive impact that PBIS coaching has on students who would be otherwise be disciplined or excluded from rewards. PBIS coaches help teachers understand how to encourage positive behavior from every student in the classroom. This is achieved by creating individual plans for students who have a history of troubled behavior. The class target might be to at least stay on green for the entire day, but a particular student might be rewarded for not dropping below yellow.

I think the PBIS coaching helps me reach even our struggling scholars who may not have that foundation at home, it takes a while. We have a few that don’t have much accountability at home, so that can do whatever they want at home and it takes a little bit to get them to buy in. But, when they do, they do. One student has a separate behavior chart. It doesn’t reflect that (points to class behavior chart). Every time she gets on green or higher two times, she gets a coin. That buy-in is wonderful because you see that, whereas when she came she didn’t care, one day she’s like oh, I get to go to the store and buy stuff? Yes, you get to buy stuff and you get to keep it. It doesn’t matter if it’s kindergarten or fifth grade, Even the scholars you’re frustrated about because it doesn’t seem like anything is working, they eventually get into it too.

Teachers already have a heavy workload, as they are responsible for maintaining accurate academic records for the students and other information. Successful implementation of
PBIS requires detailed record keeping. Data is the heartbeat of the behavior management system. The coaches do a phenomenal job of keeping the teachers motivated and willing to participate in the program with fidelity, but it is not a simple task. There are times when teachers feel overwhelmed.

To be honest, I felt like giving up. I’m not going to lie and say I never felt like giving up because I have. I felt like giving up and saying that this is a waste of time. I don’t know why I’m doing this, but if I always think about the kid, and I always have to remember they’re just kids. It’s kid thinking, not adult thinking. They’re not where you are. They’re not thinking rationally the way you are. As long as I keep that in mind, it makes it worth it. – Ms Anthony, 3rd grade teacher

Even though PBIS coaching is effective in the schools, some of the teachers have internal conflicts over the philosophy of the program.

I like the idea of PBIS, I really do, but I feel like I am an old soul trapped in this new world. I’m not gonna lie about it. I do. I feel like I’m an old soul trapped in this new world because when I went to school in the 70s. I was where they are in the 70s. How we live, so how my generation dealt with things… you know I’m borderline boomer you know, generation x, so I have a little of both in me and sometimes I think aren’t you motivated just to be motivated. Why do you need a reward for that? Sometimes I struggle with that. But then, at the same time, when I really think about it, I think we also live in a time when we remember we rewarded our kids just for participating in activities. Everyone got an award, it wasn’t only 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, everybody got something and those students became parents… There has to be some intrinsic motivation as well as a positive reward. There has to be a balance and sometimes I think the PBIS motivation is so high and the intrinsic motivation is so low. And so, I struggle with it.

The goal for PBIS is that at least 85% of the staff participates. In the Drexel School District, they strive for 100% participation. Therefore, if the teachers do not want to use the systems introduced via PBIS coaching, they are required to identify the behavior management system that they would substitute for it. The principal thinks those teachers end up participating because they do not have time to reinvent the wheel. The schools
provide so many resources for PBIS that it does not make sense to the teachers for them to find time to create their own systems. Also, that teacher does not want to be an outlier. Some teachers comply with PBIS coaching because the other teachers are doing it. They don’t want to be the one who disrupts the sense of community in the school. Ms. Martin described the relationships of her colleagues by saying, “I would say that we’re a very close nit group here. We do things outside of work together. We know each other’s families, we go on vacations with each other. We’re a very close group.”

**Fidelity of Implementation**

The fidelity of the teachers, coaches, and administrators was very prevalent in the transcripts. PBIS coaching requires that every stakeholder accept responsibility for his or her involvement in behavior management. The teachers, coaches, and administrators acknowledged that coaching would not be as effective if everyone did not do their part.

The coaches were celebrated as excellent resources for the teachers. The teachers welcome the input of the coaches and are appreciative for the resources the coaches provide, but instances were reported of teachers who did not always comply with the suggestions of the coaches. The teachers did not view the coaches as figures of authority. The teachers welcomed the support of the coaches, but they did not want the coaches to monitor their instruction or implementation of strategies.

Teachers required the visibility of the principal and assistant principal in order to fully comply with coaching. Therefore, the principals and assistant principals created walking schedules that allow them to have increased visibility in the building and monitor what happens in the classrooms. For example, social
emotional learning is taught in every classroom at the same time on Friday afternoons. The administrators walk through the building at different points during this time to confirm that teachers are doing what they are supposed to do. Over time, the teachers grew to expect the walk-throughs and it became common practice to see social emotional learning in every classroom at the same time.

The principal and assistant principal are the most critical members of the PBIS teams. Their presence gets things done because it signals the importance of the items of discussion. The members of the PBIS team feel supported by the administrators and work harder to fulfill the responsibilities attached to their roles. Also, requests receive more immediate attention when the principal is present. The bureaucracy of passing through multiple levels for approval is alleviated.

The meetings are held on a regular schedule. The entire PBIS team meets at least once a month to discuss data and set goals. The principal and coach meet at least once a week to discuss student behavior and areas of concern. The coach meets with the data analyst every week to analyze data from the classroom behavior charts. The data is used to plan interventions and supports for students and to select topics of concern for social emotional learning. The coaches rely on current data so that the strategies are presented are relevant to areas of concern that are valid at the moment. All strategies are targeted towards the needs of the teachers and the students.

Positive rewards and incentives are used to get teachers to participate in coaching with fidelity. Teachers respond to incentives with just as much
excitement as the students. Initially, teachers would not respond to the newsletter and minutes from the PBIS meetings. The coaches shared information, and it remained in the teachers’ inboxes. One of the coaches received permission from the principal to raffle off gift cards to teachers who submitted answers to trivia questions on the PBIS newsletters. The meeting minutes are shared with teachers as an effort to send the message of their value in the school. The meetings are not secretive; the principals want the teachers to understand why decisions are made. The coaches want the teachers to understand that they are a resource for them.

It took years for PBIS to be implemented with fidelity and for the teachers to begin to work closely with the coaches. Despite the initial hesitation and resistance, consistency from the principals and coaches was key to achieving successful outcomes from coaching in the school. The principals and coaches remained committed to the program, initially because it was a mandatory initiative, and eventually fidelity was sustained because of the results.

The teachers are consistent in applying appropriate behavior strategies with the students and maintaining accurate records. Teachers benefit from the calm environment in the classroom. They are able to teach with minimal negative disruptions and they are able to keep their students in the classroom instead of sending them out of the classroom with office discipline referrals on a consistent basis.

Language
The participants referred to language many times during the interviews. PBIS is the first language spoken in the schools within the Drexel School District. The administrators, staff, students, and volunteers use PBIS language throughout the schools.
Therefore, expectations and procedures are clear and consistent from wall to wall across the schools. The use of a common language helps the teachers achieve the desired outcomes set forth by PBIS coaches and school administrators and it helps the students understand the expectations that are set forth for them. This common language is a dominant factor in the success of coaching/ongoing teacher development.

Specific student expectations are scaffold across the grade levels, but certain factors are set in stone throughout the buildings. Every teacher has to hang a seven-tier behavior chart in the classroom. Everyday the students begin with their clips on ready to learn. Clip up means that the students have to physically move their clip up as a reward for positive behavior and clip down means that the students have to move their clip down. If a student’s clip is moved down, there are opportunities for the student to move the clip back up throughout the school day. The students’ behavior points are calculated at the end of the week and student behavior reports are sent home to the parents. Noise levels expectations are taught in every classroom for every space in the building. The students are aware of the expectations throughout the building and they are expected to abide by them regardless of who they are with. The students are taught behavior matrixes for different areas of the school building and posters hang throughout the school to serve as visual reminders.

Teachers have different teaching styles and personalities, but the student behavior expectations are consistent.

The majority of the teachers do the same thing, not the same way, but having the same perspective, using the same language. We all speak the same language. So when we use our words respect, responsible, and safe, every scholar gets it and there is no grey area that they don’t understand. They understand what it means. It gives us a common bond that we’re all
using the same language with the scholars and parents so there’s no room for I don’t know what that means. – Principal Franklin

There’s a universal behavior model for what’s expected in the classroom and what is expected outside of the classroom. So, for example, we have a behavior matrix for classes that communicate leadership, advocacy, service and success. So, each category has a matrix it says today we’re looking for students who stay in their designated area or today we’re looking for students who are quiet in the hallway. Today, we’re looking for students who turn in all of their assignments. Today, we’re looking for students who speak at volumes only high enough for their shoulder partner, things like that. That has helped because it’s universal. I know that if we were to swap classes and even though teachers’ teaching styles differ, they have the same expectations as my class is supposed to. You know, next door in the 5th grade class or the 2nd grade class. The same expectations are taught throughout the school. –Ms. Smith, 1st grade teacher

I think [coaching] is helpful because it’s school-wide and if you have a system that’s just yours it may work for your class, but you know, every year you have to teach the language and you have to teach the expectations. Whereas, by it being school-wide, everybody is using the system, so when you get a new class the students already know the system, except the new kids. They know the expectations, they know the language. They know if I say ‘SWAT’ that means to stop, walk away, and tell someone. -Ms Taylor, 4th grade teacher

Every student is expected to respond to the school’s behavior norms. New students are not overlooked when they transfer into the Drexel School District. Instructional time is dedicated to social emotional learning every Friday for every student. Usually, the students receive social emotional learning from their classroom teachers, but the coaches pull the new students in groups and give them crash courses on the school district’s PBIS language. The students are pulled in student ambassador groups during their first week in the school. The coaches referred to this process as Drexelizing the students, helping them embrace they culture of the Drexel schools. The school district has nearly a 25% mobility rate. New students move in the district and transfer into the schools frequently.
Usually, it does not take long at all. As soon as they see it they accept it. It also depends on where they came from to be honest. We call it Drexelizing them because we do get a lot of students who we can tell that they have not been exposed to a positive culture and it takes a little longer for those kids, but as soon as they see the toys and coins they want it. – Coach Lee

Typically, the school year begins with a kick off for the students. Every student is invited to attend the kickoff with the teachers. The gymnasium has different entertainment stations for the students and the students can participate in various activities. It is an opportunity for the students to see the rewards that are available to them for following the rules in school. The kickoff includes an assembly also. The administrators and PBIS team use this time to set the tone for the school year. They present the behavior expectations for the school year. The coaches create videos in which the teachers and students act out scenarios that demonstrate positive and negative school behavior. A shorter version of the kickoff is done at the beginning of the second and third trimesters.

In between the kickoffs, the teachers are allocated 30 minutes to provide explicit instruction on social emotional learning. Every classroom in the school is expected to teach social emotional learning at the same time. All of the students learn about the same topic. The topics are selected based on the student behavior data. If physical aggression was reported as an area in need of attention, the PBIS coach would prepare lessons for the teachers to help the students understand how to express themselves in a more positive way. Behavior data is analyzed from the weekly behavior reports and office discipline referrals. Topics are selected that have occurred throughout the building. In cases in which a small number of students are responsible for repeated disciplinary incidents, those students are
pulled in a focused group or have individual time with the school’s counseling staff to identify the reason behind the misbehavior. The student(s) receive guidance that can help them improve their behavior. Although certain behaviors warrant disciplinary action based on the district’s discipline code of conduct, steps are taken to address the problem behavior so that it isn’t continuously repeated.

Prior to full implementation of PBIS and the support of the coaches, all of the teachers did their own thing in the classroom. Some of the teachers appeared to be successful, but there were others who felt distressed as a result of student behavior. They exerted too much energy towards classroom management and failed to meet their instructional goals. “It is hard to teach in a classroom that lacks order.” You could walk through the halls and tell which teachers had a grip on their classroom and which teachers were struggling.

I would say that the behavior has drastically impacted my teaching experience in a few different ways. As the teacher, when the kids are changing, so with each generation, I feel that their expectations, what’s norm for them is different from me as a person and what I expect. So, the whole come in the class and sit down and do what you’re supposed to do attitude is not prevalent among the students. –Ms. Anthony

The PBIS coaches work with teachers to keep them abreast of current classroom management practices. They are always available to work with teachers and provide support for them.

Conclusion

In summary, the administrators, coaches, and teachers agreed that the benefits of continuous teacher development/coaching are worth the cost of implementation. The school district has experienced a positive transformation as student discipline referrals
have decreased from 9,284 to 4,955 and out of school suspension days have decreased from 3,997 to 1,575 over the past 4 years since PBIS was introduced in the school district. Costs include paying the salary for a district-wide PBIS coordinator, compensation for PBIS coaches in the schools, and their trainings. Non-financial expenses include the demand of time for the completion of paperwork, tracking data, and the willingness to make adjustments to current practices. Despite initial hesitation from some of the teachers, it is agreed that the adjustments made were worth the positive outcomes. This chapter will summarize elements that contribute the success of coaching in the school district.

Continuous teacher development/coaching could be improved by giving teachers more planning time for preparation and collaboration with colleagues. Teachers are content with the delivery of professional development. They have meetings at least once a month and they are free to meet with the principal and coaches on an as needed basis. The teachers receive ample information from which they are informed of expectations, strategies, and feedback on their performance. However, one of the strains that the teachers experience is a lack of planning time. The teachers only have twenty minute planning periods, so they do not have adequate time to collaborate during the school day. Members of the PBIS team are compensated for the time they spend in meetings. They receive two hours of compensation at their non-instructional rate. Even though the pay is nominal in comparison to the time they contribute to the effort of classroom management coaching and professional development coordination, they are paid. Teachers volunteer countless hours fulfilling the general requirements of teaching. Now, they are required to compound additional requirements with their instructional tasks.
The principal plays a vital role in teacher development/coaching. The principal receives directives from the school district and bears the responsibility to implement the directives in their respective school. The principal can delegate certain roles and tasks to staff members in the school, but the visibility and involvement of the principal is what helps to rally support from the staff members. It is challenging to get a school’s staff to buy-in and support an initiative if it does not appear to be of importance to the principal. The principal must attend meetings, monitor implementation, and provide feedback. The principal’s involvement in coaching is a significant factor in its effectiveness.
CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

As discussed in chapter 4, PBIS coaching can a valuable resource for teachers. It provides teachers with an outlet from which they receive continuous professional development to improve their instructional practice. In some cases the need for instructional support is evident within moments of witnessing the interaction of the teachers and students. Other times, the need for support might not be as overt. Regardless of how well a teacher manages the classroom, there will always be room for improvement, especially considering the ever-changing composition of student bodies. Classrooms change from year to year, even from one semester to another. Student groups are hardly ever the same. Therefore, instructional strategies cannot remain stagnant; they are not universal enough to be permanently and indefinitely effective.

Coaching provides an opportunity to focus on improving teacher performance instead responding to student behavior with immediate punitive consequences. Oftentimes, punitive consequences are only a temporary solution to student behaviors because they do not teach the students how to correct their behavior. The teachers are able to remove the student with suspensions or detentions for a brief period of time, but the student(s) return with the same behaviors. According to Cooper (1987), inappropriate behaviors would decrease if suspensions and expulsions were true punishments for students. Coaching and professional development equip teachers with proactive measures that prepare teachers to deliver quality instruction to students. PBIS coaching
focuses on proactive responses to managing student behavior and rewarding positive behavior.

In this research study, school wide discipline practices and classroom management coaching were examined through a Critical Race Theory lens in order to understand whether coaching and continuous teacher professional development could be effective in reducing the rapid expansion of the school to prison pipeline. Current policies have increased the odds of student suspension, expulsion, and arrests at school. The school to prison pipeline disproportionately affects the poor, students with disabilities, and youth of color. African American students are suspended and expelled at rates higher than any other group despite comparable infractions (Heitzegm, 2009).

The findings of this study produced four themes that revealed components of successful classroom management coaching in the schools; (a) supportive environment, (b) buy-in, (c) fidelity, and (d) language. The school district’s discipline reports provide evidence that the number of discipline referrals and days of out of school suspension drastically reduced in the years subsequent to the implementation of PBIS coaching in the schools. Interviews with participants in the schools gave insight to implementation of the practice.

To answer the research question, the administrators, coaches, and teachers agree that classroom management coaching is a beneficial practice in the Drexel Public Schools. The participants expressed a mutual understanding of the roles of the administrators, coaches and teachers. The role of the principal was determined as the most significant of the three, as the principal’s response to the coaching initiative influenced the willingness of the staff members to participate in coaching. The
participants are pleased with the change in student discipline as an outcome of the implementation of classroom management coaching and ongoing teacher development. The teachers agreed that the coaching is was necessary and the coaches are a great resource for them. Although the teachers wish they had more time in the day, overall, they committed to the components of coaching and over time the sacrifice of time for data collection and social emotional learning gave them a return of time because instruction is not interrupted as often and students are more engaged in instruction. The Drexel School District was described as a very pleasant place.


Coaching and ongoing teacher development are seemingly effective in the Drexel School District. The administrators, coaches, and teachers are in agreement that the benefits outweigh the costs of implementation and they hope that coaching and teacher development remain a high priority in the school district. The school district can celebrate improved discipline data. However, a different truth is revealed when the analysis is filtered through Critical Race Theory lens.

Supportive Environment
The schools are described as a comfortable place for the teachers because they are able to achieve their professional objectives in a space where they feel like they have
support and encouragement. They feel like they are given the tools they need to be successful. Principals and coaches are accessible for the teachers so that teachers feel comfortable approaching them if they have questions or if they are seeking a solution to a problem. Interaction between teachers and coaches are not limited to situations in which the principals and coaches have negative information or feedback for teachers. The schools have a collaborative environment that supports working as a team to promote positive student interactions and outcomes.

Despite the seemingly positive atmosphere, the collaboration is not declared as an attempt to directly rectify the marginalization of Black students that is caused by suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices. In the Drexel School District, the classroom management coaching and professional development does not address issues of race and culture. School wide student behavior and discipline professional development is based on the data of the schools and the student bodies at large. Therefore, the issue of student behavior management is approached with a color-blind lens.

Scholars of Critical Race Theory prefer an approach that acknowledges race consciousness instead of the liberal notion of color-blindness. The distinctions between equality of process and equality of outcomes can raise questions about the practices of teachers in schools. Emphasis on a vision of equality would make the ideal of color blindness apparently problematic (Dixson, 2005). Throughout the interviews, one could infer that Black students were being discussed, but the participants talked around race instead of calling it out as a factor. Black participants would look at me hinting that I know what they mean and White participants were seemed nervous to refer to a student
as Black. By implementing coaching and professional development, the school district acknowledges the need for a different approach to managing student behavior, but the avoidance of discussing race matters fails to acknowledge the position of Black students who are taught by mostly White female teachers. The teachers miss out on the opportunity to learn strategies that can lend to the formation of stronger and more meaningful relationships with students of color.

Banks (2015) argues, “It is common knowledge that classrooms are not culturally neutral terrains; they are constructed around sets of norms, values and expected behaviors that are culturally bound. (p.1) Students can potentially continue to struggle in a space that is not designed to be inclusive of their cultural norms. Cultural consciousness should replace color-blindness in coaching and ongoing teacher development. Perhaps, additional training might be offered in the future to help them understand the cultural components of student behavior and discipline practices. Cultural competency would give the teachers a different understanding of the students they serve. Such is needed in this school district particularly because the majority of the teaching staff members are White women and the majority of the students are Black. Coaching is about more than just complying with the rules; coaching should develop stronger teachers.

**Buy-in**

PBIS coaching was adopted in the Drexel Public Schools as a direct objective of the district’s superintendent at that time. On the surface level, it might not seem as if buy-in was not an option for administrators and staff. However, their belief in the program affected the degree of effectiveness. If the administrators did not demonstrate belief in the potentially successful student outcomes, the staff would not have believed in the program and worked as hard as they did.
The teachers were resistant towards the demands of coaching even though it was a directive of the superintendent and handed down by the principal. PBIS coaching involved detailed record keeping and data analysis in addition to the ongoing tasks and responsibilities that teachers already had. Derrick Bell developed the idea of interest convergence which asserts that White elites will tolerate or promote racial advances for Blacks only when their White self interest is promoted as well. (Delgado, 1995) Such was the case in this school district until the teachers began to witness positive changes in the classrooms where the teachers accepted the directives of the coaches and incorporated components of professional development in their professional practice. Even so, the teachers did not necessarily comply with coaching to give the students a better experience and address the marginalization of students. Instead, modern approaches to student behavior management gave the teachers a calmer work environment. Perhaps, the teachers exchanged increased paperwork and reporting for a calmer work environment because of personal satisfaction and perceived improved professional practice. The equity of discipline practices for Black students might not have been a factor.

The motive of the school district’s superintendent was unknown, but PBIS coaching in the school does not meet the criteria of Critical Race Theory if it was not introduced to address the inequity of disproportional suspensions and the need to address student behavior holistically. “Critical Race Theory mandates that social activism be a part of any Critical Race Theory project.” (Dixson, et al, 2005) School districts are quick to adopt a strategy because it is a hot topic at the time and everyone is doing it. After a few years, a new trend is introduced and the former is abandoned.
In the Drexel School District, the teachers acknowledged the positive impact that PBIS coaching has made on the school environment and they want to keep the practice in place because it is effective. The teachers and coaches would continue to follow the model of PBIS coaching in the schools even if the district no longer funded the program. If it were not for the model of coaching, the teachers would face the challenge of creating their own strategies which means they would need more time, experience increased trial and error, and not have the support of a coach to assist with practices.

Data is a huge component of PBIS classroom management coaching. School leadership needs to present data that highlights the disproportionate discipline practices across the country so that the teachers will have knowledge of the urgency to restructure school wide behavior management. A presentation of such bold data could trigger an empathetic response and help teachers understand why a transformation of school wide behavior management and student discipline policies should be a top priority.

**Fidelity**

PBIS is implemented with fidelity in the Drexel Public Schools. Staff members are very active and do their part to make the program work successfully. PBIS would fail if the participants did not fully adhere to the components of the program. The school administrators and coaches monitor the teachers to ensure that proper strategies are being utilized with the students. They analyze behavior data to determine which students are referred the most, which teachers have the most referrals, which behaviors are reported with the highest frequency, and the consequences assigned to the students.

Fidelity is defined as the quality of being faithful (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016). In the case of classroom management coaching, the question is what are the teachers being faithful to? Is it sincere belief that teachers have the influence to transform
the culture of student behavior management by implementing the strategies introduced to
them by the coaches or is it that the teachers are merely faithful to staying in compliance
with school regulations in order to avoid low ratings? The fidelity of the interview
participants varied. Teacher responses were nearly 50/50 for each of the scenarios
described. The source of the fidelity affects the effectiveness.

Negative beliefs produce instructional practices that lend to negative outcomes.
Negative beliefs regarding expectations for student success, negative perceptions of the
school climate, and negative perceptions of family environment are consistent across
schools that serve predominantly at risk students (Christle, 2010). Over 80 percent of
the nation’s teachers are White, mostly White women and stereotypes influence their
decision to suspend or expel students. White teachers feel most threatened by boys of
color and view them as disruptive (Christle, 2010).

Generic participation in professional development is not sufficient to change these
attitudes. School leaders must provide training that addresses systemic racism and the
impact that it has on students of color in order to correct the injustices of racist
disciplinary practices. The fidelity of participation in coaching activities should be
concretely based on the notion that proactive management practices are better suited for
student behavior management because students have an opportunity to remain in the
classroom and learn.

**Language**

The process of turning around student behavior and promoting positive
interactions is less daunting for the teachers and coaches as a result of similar language
being used throughout the schools. The coaches support the teachers in using language
that is supported by PBIS literature. Regardless of the teacher’s personality, social norms, or communication style, certain procedures, processes, and terms are used from wall to wall in the school to demonstrate consistency in the approach of school wide behavior management. Certain expectations are the same throughout the entire building.

In the schools, students are referred to as scholars, acronyms are used to promote self-awareness and define behavior expectations. For example, if a teacher says “Swat”, the students know that it means stop, walk away, and think about it. Signage that supports the acronyms is visible as reminders throughout the schools. The students are able to adhere to the expectations because they are made explicit for them.

The students respond well to the language. They demonstrate a smooth transition from classroom to classroom and from one grade to another as a result of the streamlined language. Teachers benefit from the language because they are able to focus on instruction instead of re-teaching behavior or being interrupted by student misbehavior. Shared language helps the teachers manage their classrooms. Coaches are on hand to introduce new language and to support the teachers with being consistent with the language.

Albeit, that the language has helped to transform the culture of the school. The one-dimensional approach is not in alignment with critical race theory because it does not account for the complexities of individuals. This is a colorblind approach to student behavior management. In order to account for the diversity of the students, the leadership team would need to consider the perspectives of the students affected by the school-wide discipline language and expectations. The language needs to be sensitive to the needs of the students. Research suggests that this can be achieved by using culturally responsive
Classroom management practices. Culturally responsive classroom management is “classroom management in the service of social justice” (Weinstein, 2004, p.27)

Critical Race Theorists hold that color blindness will allow us to redress only extremely egregious racial harms, ones that everyone would notice and condemn. But if racism is embedded in our thought process and social structures as deeply as many [Critical Race Theorists] believe, then the “ordinary business” of society – the routines, practices, and institutions that we rely on to effect the world’s work – will keep minorities in subordinate positions. P 22 Delgado, R., Stefanic, J. (2001).

A Nation at Risk was written to address the degree to which the nation was in jeopardy due to the low-performance schools across the nation. Over time, the term at risk became used to describe people of color. The shift of the meaning of the category is an example of how the language of difference works to create inferiority even if it was not the initial intent (Ladson-Billings, 1999) The language of PBIS coaching is wonderful in that it helps the teachers express themselves in a universal language throughout the school community. However, it is not rich enough to encompass culturally responsiveness. Students of color can continue to be marginalized with such practices.

Conclusion
Classroom management is perceived as an effective practice for creating a calmer climate in the Drexel Public Schools as discipline referrals and suspensions have reduced. Overall, the students respond positively to the strategies implemented as a result of coaching. PBIS coaching is a step in the right direction. Teachers learn alternatives for interacting with students and punitive consequences no longer serve as the only options.
Despite the perceived success of the program, its color-blind nature will not allow it to generate a transformation that will end racism in disciplinary practices. Racism must be acknowledged as a problem in order for it to be resolved.

This study is effective in that it highlights criteria that contribute to teachers’ willingness to participate in training opportunities and accept feedback from another person in the school besides the principal and the assistant principal. The teachers became even more committed to working with the coaches over time as evidence supported the effectiveness of the strategies.

Although the selected PBIS classroom management program does not meet the criteria of Critical Race Theory, it can serve as a starting point in the transformation of school wide behavior management and student discipline practices. The legwork is done. Now, the administrators only need to compound layers of cultural awareness onto the training to make it more effective. The teachers can even be involved in this process. Their narratives would make the process more personal and meaningful.

The transformation of discipline practices using the ideals of Critical Race Theory will not occur without resistance. After all, The structure and content of the original Constitution was based on the desire to preserve racial hierarchy through the system of slavery while providing political and economic gains to Whites (Alexander, 2011). Alexander (2011) asserts
These new rules have been justified by new rhetoric, new language, and a new social consciousness, while producing many of the same results. This dynamic, which legal scholar Reva Siegel has dubbed: preservation through transformation,” is the process through which white privilege is maintained, through the rules and rhetoric change. (21)

The subordination of Black students through discipline practices is not coincidence. It is an aggressive approach to perpetuate oppression and uphold the nation’s racist caste system.

Despite the value of this research project, its scope is limited as participants from only three schools were interviewed. Future research should compare the effects of classroom management coaching in schools that incorporate cultural relevant components to schools that use a colorblind model. Outcomes should include disciplinary data as well as academic achievement. Studies should dive in to examine resistance to culturally relevant training. Additionally, studies should include the narratives of the students.

Policymakers can use the findings of this study to encourage the allocation of funds to programs for teacher development. School administrators can use the findings of this research study to plan a rollout of coaching in their schools. Teachers can use the findings of this research study to discover motivation to continuously strive to improve his or her professional practice.

The Drexel Public School District is a model of best practice in classroom management coaching and ongoing teacher development because of the successful outcomes that the school district achieved as a result of implementing classroom management coaching. The school district’s leadership achieved full implementation across the school district and the school community participated with fidelity. Participants were well versed in the expectations of classroom management coaching and
they worked hard as a team. Teachers complied with the demands of classroom management coaching because it was a directive, but they also bought into the logic behind the need for a positive and proactive response to school-wide behavior management. They accepted ownership of their responsibilities and did whatever it took to create a positive learning environment for the students.
References


New Press.


Inc.


Sage.


Westview Press. 251–271.


United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights


Appendix A

10/27/2015

James Anderson
Educational Policy and Organizational Leadership
357 Education Building
M/C 708

RE: Classroom Management and Student Discipline Practices Undisclosed: Perspectives of School Administrators and Teachers - A Qualitative Analysis
IRB Protocol Number: 16236

EXPIRATION DATE: 10/26/2018

Dear Dr. Anderson:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled Classroom Management and Student Discipline Practices Undisclosed: Perspectives of School Administrators and Teachers - A Qualitative Analysis. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 16236 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(2).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at the OFRS office, or visit our website at http://ofrs.research.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Rose St Clair
Assistant Human Subjects Research Specialist, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

c: Kimberly Watson
Appendix B

January 19, 2016

Hello,

My name is Kimberly Watson and I am a doctoral candidate from the Educational Policy and Organizational Studies Department at the University of Illinois. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about classroom management and student discipline practices. You’re eligible to be in this study based on your professional experience in the field of education. I obtained your contact information from the school’s website.

I am asking you to participate in a one on one interview that will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. During the interview you will be asked questions regarding your classroom management practices, knowledge of student discipline policies, and effects of discipline on student outcomes. With your approval, the interview will be audio recorded to assist in transcribing the data. Your participation in this research will be confidential and after the data have been transcribed and coded, the audio recordings will be destroyed to protect your identity.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to participate or withdraw your participation at any time. If you’d like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at krwatson@illinois.edu or (773) 412-4704.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Watson
Doctoral Candidate
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Appendix C

Dear ________________.

You are invited to participate in a research study that will analyze school administrator and teacher perspectives on classroom management and student discipline practices. This study is being conducted by Kimberly Watson who is a PhD student and Professor James Anderson in the Educational Policy, Organization and Leadership (EPOL) Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

You will participate in a one on one interview that will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. During the interview you will be asked questions regarding your classroom management practices, knowledge of student discipline policies, and effects of discipline on student outcomes. With your approval, the interview will be audio recorded to assist in transcribing the data. After the data have been transcribed and coded, the audio recordings will be destroyed to protect your identity. Additionally you will have the opportunity to read your transcript and omit any quotations from the study.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to end your participation at any time during the interview without penalty. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Your relationship, if any, with the University of Illinois or the College of Education will not be impacted by your decision to complete or withdraw from the interview.

Your study-related information will be kept confidential; in general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to tell certain people about you. For example, your records from this research may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- Representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- Other representatives of the state and university responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research;
- Federal government regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services

As with many studies there are some foreseeable risks that exist within this research. You may experience some mild, temporary discomfort relating to the interview, as the questions asked concern your feelings, attitudes, and personal experiences. This study will not, however, involve risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us identify effective strategies for classroom management and student discipline practices.
The dissemination of these results will be reported in the author's dissertation. She may also consider disseminating her results as a part of a future journal article, publication, academic presentation and/or secondary review. No identifying information will be used within the dissemination process. Your remarks will be made unidentifiable.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Kimberly at (773) 412-4704 or Professor Anderson at (217) 333-7404. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board irb@illinois.edu or (217) 333-2670.

Do you agree to be audio recorded during the interview process? (The recordings will be used for transcription purposes only.)

Yes or No Signature: ______________________

I certify that I am over 18 years of age, have read this form, and volunteer to participate in this research study.

Name: ______________________

Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________________
Appendix D

Principal Interview Protocol

Participant: ________________________________

Place: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Time of Interview: ________________________________

1. Please describe the culture and climate of the school.
2. How do you support the teachers with classroom management?
3. What is the role of the classroom management coach?
4. How do you support your classroom management coach?
5. How does the classroom management coach impact your role as a principal?
6. Describe the impact the classroom management coach is having on the school.
7. How involved is the classroom management coach in monitoring the school’s culture and climate as well as student discipline goals?
8. What impact has the classroom management coach had on fostering professional development?
9. What would be different if there was no classroom management coach at your school?
10. Has the school’s discipline data improved as a result of the classroom management coach’s contributions? If so, how?
11. What are students typically suspended for?
12. What leads up to the suspension?
13. Which ethnic group of students has the highest suspension rate?
14. How do you respond to a teacher who appears to be uncoachable?
15. What else would you like to share with me regarding classroom management coaches in general or specifically about your classroom management coach and the impact he/she has had on your school?
Appendix E

Teacher Interview Protocol

Participant: ____________________________

Place: ________________________________

Date: _________________________________

Time of Interview: ______________________

1. What grade/subject do you teach?
2. How many years have you been a teacher? How many years at _____school?
3. How has classroom management impacted your teaching experience?
4. Will you describe your experience with classroom management?
5. What strategies do you implement for classroom management? Do students respond positively?
6. How do you respond to a student who is disruptive?
7. Does student behavior impact your ability to teach?
8. What are the trends or patterns in student behavior in your classroom?
9. What are your thoughts on conflict resolution between teachers and students? What is the best non-hostile option?
10. What is the role of the classroom management coach?
11. How does your classroom management coach support you?
12. Please describe your relationship with the coach.
13. How has the classroom management coach influenced your role as a teacher?
14. Describe the impact of having a classroom management coach has had on the school.
15. How involved is the classroom management coach in monitoring the school’s culture and climate?
16. How does the classroom management coach assist with the behavioral performance of the students?
17. What impact has the classroom management coach had on fostering professional development?
18. What would be different if you did not have a classroom management coach?
19. What else would you like to share with me regarding classroom management coaches in general or at your school?
Appendix F

PBIS Coach Interview Protocol

Participant: ________________________________
Place: ___________________________________
Date: ____________________________________
Time of Interview: _________________________

1.) What is your role as a PBIS coach?
2.) Who do you support in this role?
3.) Please describe your relationship with the teachers.
4.) How are teachers identified who are in need of additional support with classroom management?
5.) How would you respond to a teacher who seems uncoachable?
6.) How often does the school have PBIS professional development?
   a. What forms of support are offered?
7.) What impact has coaching had on the school?
8.) What types of behavior are the most discipline referrals assigned for?
9.) Has the school’s discipline data changed as a result of the implementation of PBIS?
10.) How is PBIS data tracked?
11.) Do you perceive PBIS coaching as an adequate resource for decreasing the frequency of student discipline referrals and improving the culture and climate of the school?