SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR DISCIPLINE DECISION-MAKING FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children, Max, Veronica, Ruth, and Mika. Remember the tree you come from and the sturdy stock of the root. I love you.

Mom

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ABSTRACT

Suspensions and expulsions for students with EBD are growing because many school administrators use this strategy as a quick option to manage student behavior. School district policies and procedures for the discipline of students become part of the school's organizational guidelines or operating process and can limit school administrators' options for alternative discipline decisions. This study took place in a US Midwestern state of Kansas and included 11 school administrators from elementary, middle, and high school levels in 8 districts. The research was conducted through an interview format with questions centered on the structure of the school, inclusion practices, classroom settings and size, the discipline policies and protocols for the district, and school administrators' decision-making when it came to discipline for students who are EBD. Findings centered around five themes that emerged from the data: (a) the experience and training the administrators received to prepare them for handling students with EBD, (b) training the administrators provide for their staff to help them manage these students, (c) the importance of building positive relationships, (d) the variations to the discipline approaches administrators chose for students with EBD, and (e) the behaviors that would warrant a suspension and alternatives to suspension for these students. The theoretical framework focusing on single loop and double loop learning was used to draw conclusion. Building level administrators are expected to manage a wide range of situations from providing support to teachers, to providing behavior management to students. Some students have special needs that make behavior management more challenging. Implications of this research could impact policies and practices for behavior management at the building level as well administrator preparation programs at the college and university level.

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CHAPTER 1

School administrators are expected to be competent in instructional methods, curriculum, and assessment procedures for general and special education students in order to meet the demands of stakeholders (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013). They are also responsible for establishing and enforcing behavioral expectations for all students to ensure the safety of their schools (King & Newmann, 2001). This task requires understanding a variety of behavior management strategies coupled with decision-making skills that provide the best discipline choice for both the student and school environment.

Standard disciplinary procedures that school administrator administrators typically employ are effective for managing minor behavior problems but are often ineffective for special education students who have been identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), (McLaughlin, Leone, Warren, & Schofield, 1994; Pearce, 2009). Because of their severe behaviors, students with EBD are suspended and/or expelled at a disproportionally higher rate than students from general education or students with other exceptionalities (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Idol, 2006); McCarthy and Soodak (2007). Over 13% of students with disabilities were suspended in 2009-2010 school year (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). When these students are removed from the classroom due to discipline issues, they miss out on learning opportunities and are at risk for life long problems such as increased rates of dropping out of school, unemployment, and incarceration (Dupper et al., 2009; Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2013).

Research Problem

The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and 2004 (IDEA) were enacted to protect students' equal

access to education. PL 94-142 was the result of court cases across the country that focused on schools' denial of access to students with special needs because there was no constitutional provision for free appropriate public education (FAPE) (Itkonen, 2007).   Educational reform for students with special needs, especially those with EBD, has not been easy, as parents and advocacy groups have often disagreed on what was best for students (Itkonen, 2007). Upholding these issues of access to education, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) shifted the focus to educational outcomes and made it harder for schools to suspend or expel students in an effort to keep them in educational settings (Itkonen, 2007; Leafstedt et al., 2007).

IDEA outlined nationwide regulations for school districts to use in the creation of policies regarding the education of students with disabilities, including those policies focused on discipline (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). This law also regulated policies related to changes in placement, basic knowledge of disabilities for practitioners, and discipline procedures. The discipline procedures included the number of days students with special needs could be suspended and or expelled and included provisions for the types of behaviors that warranted such discipline (US Department of Education, 2013).

However, in spite of these legal protections, suspensions and expulsions for students with EBD are growing because many school administrators use this strategy at a disproportionally higher rate than students from general education or students with other exceptionalities (Dupper et al., 2009; Frick, Faircloth, & Little, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2013). National statistics indicate, "Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension (13%) than students without disabilities (6%)" (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Office of Civil Rights, 2014, p. 1). Removals from school, in the 2009-2010 school year, for students with EBD were

for a variety of disciplinary infractions such as drugs, weapons, violence, and destruction of property (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

To comply with federal legislation, school districts create local policies and procedures for the discipline of students, which then become part of the school's organizational guidelines or operating process. However, some district policies conflict with federal regulations, which can be confusing for school administrators. For example, zero tolerance policies, designed as a disciplinary measure to prevent violence in schools, can result in the suspension of students due to non-dangerous activities like bringing a pair of nail clippers to school (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; K. R. Evans & Lester, 2012). These policies typically require automatic removal and in most instances a response from law enforcement and punish the student (Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). Discipline protocol restrictions, such as those that limit school administrators' options, allow school administrators to automatically default to decisions of discipline focused on suspension and/or expulsion as a means of removing the problematic behavior. School administrator administrators may not make discipline decisions based on what is the most effective measure to change the behavior but rather on the discipline procedures set forth by the board policies (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Pearce, 2009).

School administrators tend to draw upon their past experiences, attitudes, organizational routines, and processes to make decisions, which also influences their discipline decisions (Argyris, 1994; Idol, 2006; Miller Richter, Lewis, & Hagar, 2011; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). The past experiences with the student and or the family may increase the tendency for school administrators to suspend (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). These authors also noted that factors influencing suspension such as school leadership, school policies, lack of training for staff, and possible bias are controlled by the school.

Administrators may also lack the knowledge of discipline techniques alternative to suspension and/or expulsion to manage severe student behaviors while overseeing the education of students with EBD (Frick et al., 2012; Lindahl, 2014; Losen & Gillespie, 2012). For this reason, Dupper et al. (2009) said there are more students with EBD suspended or expelled for exhibiting behaviors that are not dangerous to themselves or others but are merely disruptive to the learning environment, such as testing the teacher's authority.

Organizational leaders deal with problems by creating policies that protect employees and/or the organization (Argyris, 1991). In education, policies about behavior management are in place to maintain a safe educational environment for students to learn. However, error may occur when those policies do not have the intended outcome. "An error is any mismatch between plan or intention and what actually happened when either is implemented" (Argyris, 1993, p. 1). For example, after several incidents at public schools involving knives, zero tolerance policies were implemented. Zero tolerance policies were intended to bring swift consequences to students who brought weapons to school (K. R. Evans & Lester, 2012; McCarthy & Soodak, 2007). However, some school officials interpreted the policy to include things such as nail clippers and nail files (K. R. Evans & Lester, 2012). The result was suspension and expulsion of students who brought these items to school but had not intended to use them to cause harm. This error between the intention of the discipline policy and the actual outcome was, and still is, interrupting the critical decision-making needed within the organization. The lack of critical thinking for decision-making is an example of single-loop learning, which Argyris and Schon (1974) described as an organizational growth inhibitor. School administrators implement the policies of their school buildings, but may miss the double-

loop learning process to make discipline decisions that reduce the number of students with EBD

being suspended and/or expelled from public schools.

Theoretical Framework

Argyris and Schon's (1974) theory of single-loop and double-loop learning will be used

as a possible explanation for school administrators' decision-making with regard to disciplining

students with EBD.   Argyris and Schon's (1974) described single-loop learning as taking place

when the organizational manager asks one-dimensional questions that deliver a one-dimensional

response, whereas double-loop learning is more complex and turns the question back on the one

asking. The authors provided an example of single-loop learning as a thermostat on a wall. A

thermostat automatically adjusts to keep the temperature at the level that is set. It does not ask

what needs to happen or how much adjustment is needed. However, double-loop learning is

looking at that same thermostat and asking if it is set at the optimal setting for the environment.

The former question only requires a response of what the temperature is, whereas the latter

requires investigation into the optimal setting for the environment. In terms of educational

leadership, this theory can be applied to building level school administrators to examine their

role as educational leaders of students who are EBD. The components of the theory are

described in the sections below.

Single-loop and Double-loop Learning

Single-loop learning is helpful for "routine, repetitive tasks" that take place in everyday

life (Argyris, 1993, p. 9). Single-loop questions for educational leaders may provide them with

quick reference answers. Automatic responses such as those that come from rote tasks help

people to get through the day quickly and can be useful for some everyday situations. Examples

of single-loop in education include everyday bell schedules, taking the lunch counts, and other

routine tasks that, while necessary, do not require in depth problem solving. In regard to discipline, single-loop can be writing a child's name on the board for talking out in class, assigning detention for chewing gum, or taking away recess for incomplete assignments. These are all examples of a quick response that might be used to immediately address a student's behavior. Single-loop produces a quick, temporary solution without lasting change, whereas double-loop is aimed at longer, deeper analysis, and lasting change (Argyris, 1994; King & Newmann, 2001; Lakomski, 2001; Tagg, 2007).

Some situations require looking deeper into what is happening or why it is happening. These situations require double-loop learning, which can lead to deeper questioning and understanding of the situation, and thus better solutions to the problem. Double-loop learning occurs when a person has the skills and thinks about his or her behavior or reasoning and makes changes as needed (Argyris, 1994; Tagg, 2007). In education, double-loop learning is employed when school administrators question where the root cause of a situation lies and how a change can be made to help the situation at that level. For example, if a student is referred to the office from the playground, the School administrator employs double-loop learning if he/she asks for input from several people involved in the incident. Then he/she thinks about all the variables around that incident and develops a plan for the future to prevent it from happening again.

Governing Values

Some professionals have a hard time looking at a situation and asking deep questions because the tendency is to behave according to four basic governing values: "to remain in unilateral control, to maximize 'winning' and minimize 'losing,' to suppress negative feelings, and to be as 'rational' as possible" (Argyris, 1991, p. 103). These values help a person prevent "embarrassment or threat, feeling vulnerable or incompetent" (Argyris, 1991, p. 103).   Not

every person places the same weight or value to each of these variables, so what is most important to one may be less important to another. Argyris (1991) pointed out that some leaders use single-loop learning in an effort to protect themselves and to save face or not be embarrassed (a negative feeling) for not having immediate answers to problems. Generally, when problems arise in an organization, people want a quick solution. Educational leaders may use single-loop learning in their decision-making to appear in control with quick decision-making.

Maintaining control allows leaders to make predictions of the environment and tasks. This is done by making "unillustrated attributions and evaluations" of situations and actions (Argyris, 1993, pp. 218-219). That is, feedback from others may be welcome, but there is discouragement of questions. Leaders who seek to maintain control will treat their own viewpoints and ideas as correct, which can block others from expressing their viewpoints and lead to defensive relationships. An example of this is reflected when a leader asks a group for feedback on a project they are working on. The leader becomes defensive when the feedback does not simply validate his/her views, but when subordinates question the leader's decision. Doing so leaves the subordinate feeling like feedback is welcome to a certain point but then not welcome past that point (Argyris, 1993). School administrators may apply this concept to decision-making about student discipline through discussions with their staff about discipline procedures. He/she may ask the staff for input or ideas that would decrease student referrals, for example, but then may not be receptive to those ideas.

Minimizing loss is a governing value that protects a person from feeling vulnerable. In the situation described above, the leader may have felt vulnerable when subordinates started to express an opinion that was different from the one expressed by the leader. The leader may have worried that his/her view was not going to be accepted and thus he/she would lose. The

subordinate may have felt the same thing, although both may have been unaware of the other's feeling of potential loss. When a school administrator feels his or her staff does not trust discipline decisions, he or she may feel vulnerable and perhaps ineffective as a leader.

Suppressing negative feelings is a common response when groups of people try to work together. In the example above, the leader was initially open to other ideas and opinions but soon realized that not everyone was on the same page with the plan. He/she may have felt embarrassed because he or she may not have appeared to be a good leader if not everyone in the group was in agreement with the plan. The suppression of negative feelings is shared by more than just the leader. The subordinates may also have been suppressing negative feelings about the plan and been afraid to share those with the team. This lack of openness could make the team less effective, as potentially good ideas may not be shared. The need to suppress negative feelings can impact school administrators as well. They are tasked with dealing with the discipline of students. When their choice of discipline does not sit well with the student, parents, or the teachers, the school administrator may have some negative feelings and thus respond defensively.

Act rational is the fourth governing value that people use to determine their actions. This value leads people to try to behave in ways that are viewed as socially appropriate to avoid the above-mentioned negative feeling and to fit in with the group or organization. To do this, people use defensive routines. "Defensive routines encourage individuals to keep private the premises, inferences, and conclusions that shape behavior to avoid testing them in a truly independent, objective fashion" (Argyris, 1991, p. 103). Defensive routines are so ingrained that people do not even know they are using them. Argyris (1991) referred to this as the *theory-in use* versus *theory- in action*. Theory-in action is a self-created blueprint for how one personally believes

others should and will behave. However, theory-in use is how they actually behave. In the example above, the leader asked for feedback, so the subordinate gave his/her opinion. When the leader then responded with anger, the subordinate reacted with fear and embarrassment. The leader assumed, based on his theory in action, the subordinate would agree with the ideas. The subordinate assumed, based on his theory in action, the leader wanted to hear an honest opinion since he had asked for feedback.

These governing values or defensive routines can lead to an incomplete examination of a situation because of the feelings leaders and subordinates have about each other, the task at hand, and the possible solutions to problems (Argyris, 1993). In the educational setting, a school administrator's defensive routines may impact the decisions he or she makes about discipline for students with EBD. For example, the school administrator has a desire to maintain control of the environment to keep it safe and orderly. He/she needs to minimize loss of instructional time due to misbehavior and interruptions. They suppress negative feelings they have about others around them and they have a theory about how all students should behave in a school setting. The conflict occurs when the student with EBD behaves in a manner that is against school protocol. The school administrator must make a disciplinary decision, such as suspension or expulsion of a student for that misbehavior but might not be aware of all the variables impacting the student or other discipline alternatives.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand school administrators' decision-making process in managing behaviors of students with EBD in an effort to gain insight into decisions to use suspension and expulsion as a discipline measure. In order to understand the

perceptions of building level school administrators and their experiences with the decision-making process the following questions guided the research.

1. How do school administrators in Kansas public schools describe their decision-making process in terms of suspension and expulsion of students with EBD?

2. How do school administrators in Kansas public schools describe the available discipline options to them for students with EBD?

3. What are school administrators' understandings of alternative approaches for students with EBD other than suspension and expulsion?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to analyze information relevant to organizational decision-making and how it applies to the discipline decisions school administrators make for students with EBD. Topics included in the review are laws governing special education, educational settings for students with EBD, discipline regulations for students with EBD, outcomes for students with EBD, the role of administrators for ensuring provision of services for students with EBD, and positive behavior intervention strategies. Literature was also reviewed to shed light on the role of the school administrator as an educational leader and decision maker.

Legal Requirements for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, public law 108-446 (IDEA), was signed into law in 1990 and was reauthorized in 1997 and then reauthorized again in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (Congress, 1997; Yell, Katsiyannis, Ryan, McDuffie, & Mattocks, 2008). IDEA updated the previous special education law, PL 94-142, and ensures services for students with disabilities through special education and related services, free appropriate public education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE), employment and training, as well as independent living skills.

Federal policies such as IDEA 1997 and IDEIA 2004 mandate the eligibility criteria for EBD and differentiate these students from socially maladjusted individuals (Gacono & Hughes, 2004). Students who qualify for special education under the category of EBD are students who have an inability to learn that is not due to an intellectual disability, sensory issue or health factor. Significantly more of these students are male, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds,

and are African-American (Gage, 2013). According to the U.S. Department of Education students who qualify for the category of EBD are described by this definition,

> Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (1) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (4) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or (5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes schizophrenia, but shall not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (US Department of Education, 2013, p. 1).

According to eligibility indicators for special education, there are four exclusionary factors that must be met for a student to be eligible for special education services under the exceptionality of EBD. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math, limited English proficiency, or if the child has another exceptionality are three of the exclusionary factors. The final exclusionary factor differentiates students with EBD from students with social maladjustment, also known as conduct disorder.

> Courts have interpreted social maladjustment to mean a conduct disorder. Teams should review records to rule out that the student has been identified as a student having a conduct disorder, unless other evidence that the student also has an emotional disturbance exists (US Department of Education, 2013, p. 1).

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team determines the eligibility for special education and then identifies appropriate educational services and supports needed for the student. The IEP team includes the student if 14 years old or older, the parent or guardian, the special education teacher, the general education teacher(s), and a representative from the school who is qualified to supervise special education services, understands general education curriculum, and has knowledge of the school's resources. IDEA ensures a free and appropriate public education and limits the exclusion of special education students by shifting the philosophy from educating special education students in separate settings to educating all students in the environments in which they are making progress. The goal is to allow students to participate in general education settings as long as the accommodations and modifications are successful (Rosenberg, Sindelar, & Hardman, 2004; Yell et al., 2008; Zirkel, 2013). This is known as the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Zirkel, 2013). IDEA set parameters for LRE in order to insure free appropriate public education (FAPE). The continuum of supports for students who need special education flows from the least restrictive setting of the general education classroom to special education classrooms with specially designed instruction to self-contained classrooms, which are more restrictive. The continuum of LRE has the following levels:

1. Consultation (sometimes called "itinerant"), in which the child is in special education but the special education provider just consults with the regular education teachers);

2. Class-within-a-class, in which a special education teacher or paraprofessional is embedded in the student's regular education classroom;

3. Non-categorical resource room, in which the student is pulled out of the regular classroom and is in a class with students in a variety of special education categories for part of the day;

4. Categorical resource room, in which the student is pulled out into a special ed classroom that only serves other students with the same exceptionality for part of the day;

5. Special day school, in which the student is educated in a different building that only serves special education students; and

6. Residential treatment center.

However, recent movement toward the inclusion of special education students has increased the number of students with EBD in general education classrooms where regular education teachers make adaptations to meet their needs. Even as the makeup of the general education classrooms has shifted to becoming more inclusive of students who need specially designed instruction, more than a third of the students labeled EBD are still being educated in exclusionary settings, that is, classrooms outside the general education classrooms (George, George, Kern, & Fogt, 2013; C. R. Smith et al., 2011).

Federal Discipline Regulations for Students with EBD

Discipline provisions for children with special needs were established with the 1997 amendments to IDEA. These provisions were necessary to prevent students with disabilities from repeatedly being suspended and thus missing out on education. According to Rothstein (2000) the guidelines are complex, but specific about the amount of time a student with special needs can be suspended from public school. The Supreme Court used the 1988 Honig v. Doe decision, which held that a suspension from school for more than 10 days constituted a change in placement for the student and triggered due process procedures (Rothstein, 2000). Further, the procedural safeguards outline what is considered a change of placement for a student on an IEP and what is considered a minor variation to the educational plan.

IDEA stipulates that students with disabilities are to be educated in the least restrictive environment. For some students with EBD a setting different than the traditional public school constitutes such an environment (Flower, McDaniel, & Jolivette, 2011). A change in placement for disciplinary reasons happens when a school official or hearing officer suspends a student beyond the 10-day limit, the incidents for suspension involved substantially the same behavior, and how soon this behavior occurred in relation to other suspensions for this student. Once all of these factors are considered, the child can be placed in a more restrictive environment such as a self-contained classroom or a day school. These are known as interim alternative education settings (IAES) and restrict the student's interactions with non-identified peers (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). However, before a student can be placed in such a setting there must be an IEP team decision.

Disciplinary matters, however, may require a manifestation determination, which involves a meeting with the IEP team to discuss the behavior and determine if it was due to the student's disability. If the team determines the behavior was the result of school personnel not following the IEP, the student must be returned to the educational setting and the school district must take action to implement the IEP. However, if the behavior was deemed a direct result of the student's disability, the team can return the student to the educational placement, make changes to the IEP such as adding a behavior intervention plan, or agree to a change in placement (Pankake, Litteton, & Schroth, 2005).

Inclusion of Students with EBD

Students with EBD are educated in the general education classroom when the IEP team determines it to be the LRE. Some students with EBD are in general education inclusion classes for the entire school day while others are in general education and special education classes.

These students may require support in the inclusion setting from special education staff in order to have access to the curriculum. Often support in inclusion settings comes in the form of implementing and monitoring accommodations or modifications. In a study conducted by Watt, Therrien, and Kaldenberg (2014) regarding the inclusion of students with EBD in science classes, they found students with EBD may have difficulty with acquiring and retaining critical knowledge due to poor core academic skills and inappropriate behavior. Behaviors such as being off-task, (e.g., talking to a peer instead of listening to directions) during hands-on inquiry may be particularly problematic during science as lab lessons tend to be less structured. Support from the special education staff in the general education setting can help to decrease these difficulties for students with EBD. This support may be in the form of an additional teacher in the class (class with in a class or co-teaching), paraeducators, or accommodations and modifications to the assignments or curriculum.

Some students with EBD are not successful in the general education setting for the entire school day due to behaviors they exhibit. These students are educated in a combination of general education and special education classrooms or are pulled out of general education for the school day. Statistics demonstrate the inclusion of students with EBD has grown over the years. In 1993-1994 only 20.5% of these students were included for 80% of their school day, as compared to 39.3% of student with a learning disability (Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). The most recent data available are from the fall of 2011 where 43.2% of students with EBD spent 80% or more of their day in an inclusive educational setting (National Center for Education, 2015).

Educational Outcomes for Students with EBD

Despite the laws for special education, students with EBD tend to have poor educational outcomes compared to their peers with and without disabilities. These include lower grades and rates of minimum competency achievement and higher rates of grade retention, office referrals, absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion (Gable et al., 2012; Greenbaum & et al., 1996; Luna & Medina, 2001). Higher rates of suspension and expulsion have particularly deleterious consequences and can lead to students dropping out. Students with EBD already have a higher dropout rate than any other disability group (Flower et al., 2011). When students with EBD are excluded from school, their education is interrupted and their development hindered (Sullivan et al., 2013). Being suspended may result in behavior problems outside of school, does little to address the behavior problems at school, provides only temporary relief to frustrated school personnel, and increases the likelihood of future suspensions (Dupper et al., 2009). This exacerbates the difficulties associated with being EBD, which can lead to self-destructive behaviors resulting in increased levels of incarceration, decreased job retention skills, social problems, as well as higher incidence of drug and alcohol use and addiction causing a drain on societal resources (Flower et al., 2011; Gable, 2004; Gable et al., 2012; Lane, Jolivette, Conroy, Nelson, & Benner, 2011; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; C. R. Smith et al., 2011; Trout, Epstein, Nelson, Synhorst, & Hurley, 2006; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, & Epstein, 2005).

Role of Administrators in the Implementation of Special Education Law

School administrators play a key role in the implementation and the success or failure of special education programs within their schools (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). The leadership of the building sets the vision for the inclusion and services of students with special needs by directly impacting the school's climate, culture, and practices (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Warren &

Kelsen, 2013). According to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) the school administrator plays the central role in providing the instructional leadership that ensures that students with special needs receive an appropriate education (Frost & Kersten, 2011; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA represented a shift in philosophy, one that gave more responsibilities for special education to the school administrators (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). Conrad and Whitaker (1997) examined the role of the school administrator in regard to education laws. The administrative responsibilities for school administrators include abiding by the rules and regulations of the school but also abiding by federal laws such as IDEA. Understanding IDEA and making daily discipline decisions based on the policies included in this law are part of the role of the school administrator (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). School administrators help develop plans for the education of all students and are responsible for including students with special needs in general education settings as well as in special education classrooms. They need to understand LRE and FAPE to make an effective plan and be familiar with the range of modifications and accommodations allowed for students with disabilities (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Conrad & Whitaker, 1997).

Given school administrators increased responsibilities for special education, several studies have examined school administrators' knowledge about special education requirements. As part of a study in 1996, school administrators responded to a survey about their roles and responsibilities for special education (Quigney, 1996). The majority of participants indicated they had taken the minimum required courses, which is one course in most states, for completion of the special education programs as part of earning their building administration degree. Some school administrators reported they did not have enough special education background, which was "vital to understanding their role in special education leadership" (Quigney, 1996, p. 209).

This could impact the implementation of special education programs because of the central role of the school administrator as the local education agency representative at the IEP meetings. One of the required team members for the IEP team is someone who has knowledge of and ability to apply district resources. Generally, this responsibility belongs to the school administrator, although it can be a designee appointed by the school administrator. School administrators thus need to have knowledge of their role at the IEP meetings to ensure the implementation of the IEP. The research concluded many school administrators are lacking such knowledge.

Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) administered a similar survey to the one conducted ten years earlier, in which school administrators were asked about their leadership roles for special education. The results were based on a 58% return of the total number of the 439 surveys sent out. School administrators were asked a series of questions including their age, education level, roles and responsibilities, and their leadership roles for special education programs. Most school administrators (70%) had earned a master's degree and the average age was 47.4 years (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). Survey participants estimated that 21% of their time was spent dealing with special education concerns or issues. School administrators are expected to play a key role in the implementation of special education programs, therefore a concern for Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006, pp. 575-576) was, "the extent to which school administrators without formal knowledge and/or coursework in special education can be supportive of and actually lead schools and their faculty in today's inclusive environment." This same sentiment was discussed in an earlier publication by DiPaola et al. (2004, p. 4) who stated, "Clearly, instructional leaders who understand students with disabilities, IDEA and NCLB (No Child Left Behind) requirements, and effective practice are better prepared to provide students and their teachers with appropriate

classroom support." School administrators must be prepared to work with and in the special education classrooms to make learning a success for students with special needs (Bakken & Smith, 2011).

The School Administrator's Role in Supporting Students with Disabilities

School administrators have leadership responsibilities for ensuring students with disabilities receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The inclusion of special education students in regular education settings increased with the implementation of NCLB and further increased school administrators' responsibilities for special education (R. Smith & Leonard, 2005). This meant school administrators needed to foster working relationships with staff and between staff focused on shared responsibility and collaboration. DiPaola et al. (2004, p. 3) identified five competencies school administrators need to deploy to effectively implement special education programs and services: (a) promote an inclusive school culture; (b) provide instructional leadership; (c) model collaborative leadership; (d) manage and administer organizational processes; and (e) build and maintain positive relations with teachers, families, and the community.

Effective school administrators promote an inclusive school culture whereby all school stakeholders are working together to make objectives reachable for all students (DiPaola et al., 2004; Turan & Bektas, 2013). They create inclusive school environments by ensuring all students have access to the general education curriculum either through co-taught classes or through full inclusion into the general education setting (C. Evans & Weiss, 2014). However, an inclusive school culture goes beyond the curriculum. It also includes providing opportunities for students with disabilities to participate with non-disabled peers such as in clubs, sports teams, as well as art and music classes (DiPaola et al., 2004; Watt et al., 2014). It is the provision of

opportunities for students with disabilities to shine. School administrators who promote an inclusive school culture also highlight the accomplishments of groups and individuals through rewards and recognition (Murphy et al., 2007).

School administrators provide instructional leadership through a variety of methods. Some use book studies to discuss concepts and skills. Some use in-service time to guide and direct academic, departmental, or grade level committees. School administrators stay abreast of best practices in education through attending conferences and sharing out what they have learned with their staff. School administrators who understand students with disabilities, IDEA, and effective practices can equip teachers with materials and resources to support these students. DiPaola et al. (2004, p. 4) said,

> [School administrators] recognize the importance of comprehensive academic planning, ongoing monitoring of progress, and data-based decisions regarding students' programs. They have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to facilitate academic and structural integrity in classrooms so that students, teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, and others can work effectively.

No matter what route they take, the effective school administrator remains focused on academic outcomes for all students.

Modeling collaborative leadership can be difficult for school administrators. Most school administrators still view their primary roles as a manager of the building and programs rather than a collaborator with professionals in the creation of those programs (Williams, 2006). However, as learning environments change to include more diverse learners many school administrators are creating professional learning communities (PLCs) that facilitate communication between educational professionals. PLCs can help shift the organizational

capacity from top down leadership to a more collaborative supporting group working towards the greater good (Williams, 2006). School administrators often model the collaboration that is expected in these PLCs, thereby insuring that fundamental changes are implemented (DiPaola et al., 2004).

As noted in the theoretical framework, organizations are made up of the people and reflect the interactions of those involved within them (Gunbayi, 2007).   Effective educational leaders are good managers and administers of the organizational processes of the school and its people. Each person with the organization is a member of a group: students, teachers, administrators and are expected to behave according to their positions. School administrators are expected to communicate the expectations with each group in a manner that each group can understand (Gunbayi, 2007). School administrators implement discipline strategies that promote a safe learning environment. They identify needs, find resources, and delegate duties in an manner that creates a positive work and learning environment (DiPaola et al., 2004). School administrators are expected to balance class rosters, caseload size, access to resources, and in class supports to foster inclusion of students with disabilities (DiPaola et al., 2004). Often this means providing additional resources such as training and supporting staff members, managing the resistance from some staff, families, and other school personnel who disagree with inclusion (Walther-Thomas & Brownell, 2001).

Effective school administrators build and maintain positive relations with teachers, families, and the community. They create supports for their staff by building professional learning opportunities that lead to knowledge building and new skill development (Bakken & Smith, 2011; DiPaola et al., 2004). These new skills are then enhanced into usable tools. However, changing and adapting to new ideas, theories, and information can be difficult for

employees. Likewise, if school administrators do not support an initiative it can be impossible

for the initiative to succeed (Walther-Thomas & Brownell, 2001). The school administrator,

being the leader of the school, is key to the organizational development of that school because as

student engagement increases in the classroom misbehavior decreases (Losen & Gillespie, 2012).

Murphy et al. (2007, p. 179) stated that leadership is a "central ingredient - and often the

keystone element - in school district success" which is often defined through organizational

learning. Fostering a culture of inclusion may require a school administrator to lead an

organization to learn new practices and adopt positive dispositions toward students with

disabilities, especially those with EBD.

School administrators also have the role of ensuring the implementation of inclusive

practices through the education of their staff via professional development. Providing the time

and money needed to support their staff is a key task of school administrators in the

implementation of inclusive educational programs (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Walther-Thomas &

Brownell, 2001). It is crucial for staff to understand the importance of the IEP and the

implementation of the accommodations, goals, and placement needs for students with disabilities

(Conrad & Whitaker, 1997; DiPaola et al., 2004). As documented in the 1993 case *Doe v.*

Withers a history teacher refused to follow the IEP for a student with special needs who had an

accommodation for oral testing. As a result, the student failed the course. The parent sued the

school district and the teacher for the failure to implement the IEP (Wright, 2015). To prevent

this, school administrators must enforce the implementation of the IEP and make staff aware of

the potential legal ramification and moral obligation of not providing free appropriate public

education (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). School administrators of highly inclusive schools help

staff recognize and overcome cultural beliefs and bias that may hinder students with EBD from

being successful. Much of the increase in students with EBD being included in regular education settings can be attributed to positive behavior intervention strategies that have allowed teachers and administrators to work with the student on learning alternatives to negative behaviors.

Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion

In a report published by the Civil Right Project, Losen and Gillespie (2012) discussed alternatives to suspension of students from school. These alternatives begin with a system wide approach to behavior management known as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or Positive Behavior Supports (PBS). This system is data driven with an emphasis on changing the underlying causes of the behavior and replacing negative behaviors with positive alternatives. School administrators play a key role in the implementation of a system wide positive behavior support initiative through training of staff, making discipline decisions, and advocating for policy changes (Hieneman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Miller Richter et al., 2011).

PBS started as a positive instructional approach to teaching students with behavior problems (Hieneman et al., 2005). It was designed as an assessment-based alternative to punishment allowing students to learn replacement behaviors and social skills. IEP teams conduct functional behavioral assessments (FBA) to determine the purposes of the negative behaviors, then create a positive behavior intervention plan (BIP) to modify the behaviors (Hieneman et al., 2005). An FBA helps to identify a target behavior and reason for the behavior through gathering information, identification of patterns, analysis of those patterns, and development of positive alternatives (Hieneman et al., 2005). PBS can be provided on an individual basis, in a small group setting, or school wide.

When PBS is school wide it is known as School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) and centers on building competencies within the school that promote positive behaviors (Miller Richter et al., 2011). A framework made up of three tiers, similar to that of the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), PBIS allows administrators and their staff to work in a model that builds school capacity and competence to "(a) incorporate proactive strategies, (b) teach appropriate behaviors to all students, and (c) match behavioral interventions to students' needs" (Miller Richter et al., 2011, p. 2). MTSS is framework comprised of three tiers designed to give students customized support according to their needs in reading, math, and more recently behavior. Simonsen and Sugai (2013) describe the three tiers as follows. The first tier is the universal tier and contains all students. In this tier, adults and students model behavior expectations and low-level corrections are employed, such as verbal cues, reminders of appropriate behaviors, and teacher proximity. Tier two is for those students who exhibit minor behaviors and is known as the targeted group. Here, students may need a more direct behavior intervention but it is not at a level requiring individual behavior instruction. Tier three is for students with intensive behavior challenges who need explicit instructions in behavior expectations and modification of negative behaviors.

School administrators are the leader in the implementation of SWPBS in the academic curriculum for the school; they are also the leaders in discipline decision-making. SWPBS may include behavior modification strategies such as social-emotional learning through lesson plans, various teaching methods, age and developmentally appropriate expectations, monitoring of student engagement in the school culture, empathetic response to redirect behaviors, and restorative practice (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). The ultimate goal of these strategies is to facilitate the inclusion of students with EBD in the general education setting. SWPBS is

proactive and solution oriented providing students with EBD the structure they need to modify their behavior (Hieneman et al., 2005; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013).

Data-based Decision-making for School administrator administrators

Many professions use data to make decisions. School districts are no different and school administrators have a wealth of data available for analysis. Data for decision-making can come from a variety of sources including grades, attendance, assessments, and discipline reports. NCLB ushered in the era of "data-informed decision-making," however this is not a new concept (Murray, 2014, p. 1). Other initiatives such as the publication of the *A Nation At Risk* report in the mid 1980's and Goals 2000 in the 1990's stressed using data to make decisions about educational progress (Murray, 2014). The difference today is technology has made data gathering and sifting faster and easier for those school administrators who know how to do it.

Some school administrators may only use student achievement data to make decisions about individual students. However, this may distract school administrators from looking at the entirety of information available on a student when making decisions about discipline. Murray (2014) noted school administrators can learn important lessons when making a decision based on several forms of data. For example, school administrators should collect and use data from student achievement, demographics, perception data, and school process data. Student achievement data includes high stakes testing information, other forms of standardized testing, and informal testing data developed by the teacher. Demographic data includes race, attendance, and gender.   Perception data are a bit less concrete, but just as valid, as it included community and school beliefs, attitudes, and cultural norms. School process data come from existing school programs, initiatives, and policies or procedures. By combining these four types of data, school administrators can make data based decisions about discipline for every student. However,

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adding to this data collage, school administrators could use the data from the FBA and IEP to made decisions about discipline for students with EBD.

Physical data are not always used to make decisions however. Larsen and Hunter (2014) completed a study in which they found that secondary school administrators often made decisions based on their core values and personal beliefs. They noted that sometimes what seemed like a straightforward decision became complicated by political and structural variables at work in the district. In the research Larsen and Hunter (2014) conducted, school administrators were asked how their core-values effected their decision-making thought process, what circumstances would change their values for student education, and how they managed the conflict between what they valued and what the policy required them to do. The answers to these questions varied but the overall results of the study indicated the existence of conflict between the theory-in-use and the theory-in-action where student discipline was concerned. Participants indicated "gray areas" when making decisions about discipline for students, meaning that sometimes the behaviors could fit in several categories on the discipline policy, making it a judgment call on which discipline to choose (Larsen & Hunter, 2014, p. 80).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

After reviewing the literature, considering the research problem, and locations for conducting the research, I selected a qualitative study research design for the rich description and analysis of the perceptions of the building administrators. Qualitative studies are typically done by collecting data through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents and artifacts (Merriam, 2009). This qualitative study was designed with the purpose to describe in-depth the experiences selected building administrators in the state of Kansas have with discipline for students with EBD.

Research Context

This study took place in the US Midwestern state of Kansas, which is a largely rural state with a few urban centers such as Wichita and Topeka, the capital. Kansas shares the third urban area, Kansas City, with its neighbor Missouri. Cromartie and Bucholtz (2000) applied the definition used by the United States Census Bureau to identify the state's urban areas as Topeka, Wichita, and Kansas City. Other areas are considered rural areas. Since the 2000 census, urbanized areas in the United States are those with a population of more than 50,000, urban clusters are areas of at least 2,500 people but less than 50,000 people, and all others are considered rural (U. S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Special education in the state of Kansas is delivered through three different structures. The first type is the Special Education Cooperative. Special Education Cooperatives manage the special education services for several neighboring school districts through a cooperative agreement. One school district manages the budget for a cooperative and the other member school districts pay into the sponsoring district. This allows for sharing of expenses and staff

between all the member districts. The second type is the interlocal, and while similar to a cooperative in the sharing of staff and resources, an interlocal has its own budget and a governing board comprised of the member districts. Finally, in Kansas, special education can be provided by the school district itself, called a standalone district, and thus are not part of either a cooperative or an interlocal. Within these structures, services for students with EBD are delivered on a continuum from most restrictive, such as hospital settings, to least restrictive, which are general education classroom settings.

For an accurate representation of the state of Kansas, approximately 10-15 participants were selected from urban and rural areas, districts with special education supported by cooperatives, interlocals, as well as districts who provide their own special education services.

Participants

Due to the nature of a qualitative study, participants are purposefully selected (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative study allowed Kansas school administrators to describe their experiences as instructional leaders in buildings with different levels of LRE programs for students with EBD. There were 286 school districts in Kansas at the time of this study and all manage the needs of the students with EBD through either a special education cooperative, interlocal, or as standalone districts. Kansas had 22 cooperatives consisting of 92 school districts and 17 interlocals consisting of 140 school districts (Kansas State Department of Education, 2015). The remaining 54 were standalone districts.

Districts range in population size and are divided into classes accordingly by the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) (Kansas State High School Activities Association, 2014). The classification is based on the number of students enrolled at the secondary level in each district. The range is from 2301 students in the largest high school to

five students in the smallest school. Each classification is determined according to the student population. The largest 32 high schools comprise the 6A classification, with a range of students from 1387 to 2301. The 5A classification includes the 32 next largest high schools and a student population range of 760-1386. Class 4A is comprised of the 64 next largest high schools with a population range of 265 to 759. Another 64 high schools make up class 3A, which has a population range from 154 to 264. Class 2A also has 64 high schools and a population range from 96-154. The remaining 97 districts are placed in classification 1A with populations ranging from 5 to 96. Each district school is required to have a school administrator, although some of the smaller schools share a school administrator between buildings or the superintendent also serves as school administrator.

Using the most recent Kansas Educational Directory, I counted the 2014-2015 school year alphabetical list of school administrators and found there were 1061 school administrators in Kansas, 74 of which were assigned to multiple buildings. Since I was interested in the perceptions school administrators have about their decision-making regarding discipline for students with EBD, I desired to interview school administrators from public school districts who provide educational opportunities in a variety of settings for students with EBD. The number of participants was important to the study because too few would not give an accurate picture of what is happening and too many would be difficult for a single researcher to complete (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). As an individual researcher, interviewing all 1061 school administrators would have been a huge undertaking and not feasible. Therefore, I planned to interview 10-15 school administrators, which was a number small enough to be accomplished and yet large enough to give perspective from both rural and urban schools. Since it would be impossible to interview all the school administrators, I chose this sample size to give a reasonable and

maximum variation in the pool of school administrators (Patton, 2002). I found these school administrators through the directory of school districts and selected school administrators from elementary, middle, and high school levels in the south central Kansas region. Finally, this group of participants needed to be from schools representing a cross section of various service settings for students with EBD so as to highlight any similarities or differences in school administrator perception across different types of delivery systems. However, in the end, this did not make any difference in the findings of the research. I did not use any administrators from schools which I have been affiliated with either through employment or patronage. I ended up with a sample of 11 administrators, which fit the parameters of the study.

Data Collection

Unique to qualitative research is that it is "exploratory or descriptive, that accepts the value of context and setting, and that search for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under study" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 92). This study focused on the individual perceptions of 11 school administrators and how they viewed discipline for students with EBD. To gain this knowledge, three broad research questions formed the basis for more specific interview questions for data collection. Questions centered on the structure of the school, inclusion practices, classroom settings and size, the discipline policies and protocols for the district, and school administrators' decision-making when it comes to discipline for students with EBD. Follow up questions were based on the conversation with the participant.

In-depth interviews. Data for the study was collected primarily through individual, in-depth interviews with selected school administrator administrators. The benefit of an interview format is that it can yield a large quantity of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interviews are a

type of conversation between the researcher and the participant (Merriam, 2009). The use of personal interviews allowed the participants to tell their story or point of view in their own words in a type of conversation.

For this conversation, I used a semi-structured format that allowed for follow up questions as needed. First, I started with a few general questions to establish rapport and help the participant feel comfortable. Then, I moved to questions based on the specifics of the participant's background, school, and policies. Using a constant comparative method, comparing each participant's answers to the others to find common ground, follow up questions were asked as needed (Glaser, 1964). The theoretical framework of this study was one that specifically addresses the perceptions of a person and the situation they are dealing with. Thus, the focus of the questions for the interviews was on the school administrator's perceptions. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and follow-up interviews, if needed, did not extend past 30 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed after the interview was complete. The interview protocol and questions are contained in Appendix A.

Review of documents. Policies and procedural guidelines and documents were an important data source for this research since organizations represent their core values and beliefs through their written policies and procedures. Building administrators use and produce documents that could provide additional insight into the workings of the school, discipline procedures, and decisions that are left up to the individual administrator (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011). Such documents were available through electronic or hard copy materials. Documents important to this particular study included discipline policy and procedures guides, behavior management training agendas, school records of suspension and expulsion, office referrals, and behavior intervention plans. These documents held information about the suspension and

expulsion of students from the individual districts or schools. Because the documents may have included personally identifiable information about students, therefore were handled with care. I asked the school personnel to mask or otherwise exclude names, directory information, and any other personally identifiable student information, as that was not a necessary part of my research. The form included in appendix B was used to record information from the documents.

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis is to make sense of the data gathered during fieldwork. Data analysis was completed through several stages. The first part of analysis was the transcription of the audio-recorded interviews. This allowed for a general review of the information and organization of pieces of data pulled from the interviews. Merriam (2009, p. 176) described the process as fluid, "moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation." The transcripts allowed for visual comparison of raw information from each participant. The next step was to look at the concrete bits of data from the transcripts, notes, and documents and sort those into groupings of similarities and differences. Finally, the data groupings were compared. The comparison of information helps to find similarities and differences in the responses from each participant.

Unitizing and coding. To aid in the sorting of information or data, they were first unitized. This is the process of breaking the information down into the smallest form of usable information and linking those pieces together (Chenail, 2012; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011; Merriam, 2009). To sort the data, I needed to develop a coding system. I looked for patterns and themes that moved from general ideas to specific points. Therefore, information that was similar went together and was labeled by a key word or acronym. This was the initial

coding process (Merriam, 2009). I organized any field notes, such as information that was not planned for during the open-ended interviews or notes taken about documents, into the coding categories with the interview data. Following the initial coding process was the process of coding more specifically by assigning the axial codes. Axial codes are more descriptive to the precise data involved and helped to reveal the themes in the data by creating a link or relationship between larger initial codes (Merriam, 2009). An Excel spreadsheet was used for management of unitized data.   This helped me to find the relationship across categories and codes to determine the findings of the research.

I collected documents as part of this research including the board policies, school handbook, records on suspension and expulsion of students, records of students in special education and those who are EBD. Data gained from these documents helped to provide a glimpse into the culture of the school. I compared the policies and procedures with what the participants said using the constant comparative method. Constant comparative is the method of comparing one piece of data with another to determine commonalities (Glaser, 1964; Merriam, 2009). Identification of themes from the coded data also helped to construct links between expressions, documents, and ideas, and finding repetition, similarities and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Research Quality

Tracy (2010) identified eight criteria for ensuring quality when conducting qualitative research. Those eight criteria are worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence. I used this list of criteria to create this study.

Worthy topic. This study topic was a worthy topic because it is relevant and timely with what is happening in schools today. The situation of students with EBD and the discipline decisions school administrators make regarding them is leading this group of young people to unemployment, jail, and poor social engagement (Mathur, 2007). This research was also a worthy topic because it could raise awareness of the problem. Secondly, it is counterintuitive to many educational professionals because one would assume that suspension of a student for behavioral concerns would teach that student not to misbehave. However, as noted above, the suspension of students with EBD is an ineffective strategy.

Rich rigor. Rich rigor is the use of descriptions, explanations and samples of the data, and is aided by the amount of time spent in the field gathering the date, and helps to provide validity for the study. I used four self-reflective questions while I was working on this research, gleaned from Tracy (2010). These are: (a) Are there enough data to support significant claims? (b) Did the researcher spend enough time to gather interesting and significant data? (c) Is the context or sample appropriate given the goals of the study? (d) Did the research use appropriate procedures in terms of field note style, interviewing practices and analysis procedures? By continually asking myself these questions I was able to make decisions about such things as how my field notes were helping me to form follow up questions or adding more participants than originally planned.

Sincerity. Sincerity is characterized by transparency of the methods and self-reflexivity of biases and values. In addition to the questions above, I needed to be mindful and honest of my own personal influence on the participants, the study, and audience. Tracy (2010, p. 842) said self-reflexivity includes "assessing their own biases and motivations, and asking whether they

are well-suited to examine their chosen sites or topics at this time." I further address this in the researcher positionality section below.

Credibility. Credibility of the research refers to how dependable the research is, which means, "the readers feel trustworthy enough to act on and make decisions in line with" the research (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). This was achieved in my study through the thick description that shows rather than tells the reader about the topic through the use of enough detail that readers can arrive at their own conclusions.

Credibility also includes the triangulation of data which occurs with the use of multiple sources of data from multiple methods of collection and looking at it in multiple ways (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interview transcripts from multiple participants and multiple types of data (observations and documents) helped to achieve triangulation. Member reflections also enhance qualitative credibility by ensuring the researcher got the information correct that the participant shared. To do this each participant received a copy of their interview transcript to review, which also provided a chance for further elaboration of points and in one case a couple of additional added thoughts from the participant.

Resonance. Resonance is the ability of the research to affect an audience and can be achieved through aesthetic merit, generalizations, and transferability (Tracy, 2010). To meet these three criteria, my writing needed to be easy to understand so the reader can see the overlap to their own situation. Significant contribution stems from resonance in the fact that if readers see the similarities to their own situation they may improve their practice. The end goal of this research was to understand school administrators' decisions making about discipline for students with EBD based on knowledge they gain by really examining the situations.

Ethical. Ethical practices of conducting the research help to ensure the points described above. I understood however, that the procedures were only part of the ethics of research. "Ethics are not just a means, but rather constitute a universal end goal of qualitative quality itself, despite paradigm" (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). It was my goal to conduct this research in an ethical manner that was honoring to the participants, university, professors, and myself. The final criteria Tracy described was meaningful coherence, which is determining if the study achieves what it purports to achieve. My research used the methods and procedures that I have described. Research ethics are described in further detail in the next section.

Research Ethics

How to safeguard confidentiality is a concern for every researcher. To prepare me to conduct research I participated in a series of video trainings about conducting ethical research. Certain procedures are required to ensure that human rights are not violated through the research (Creswell, 2014). I needed to protect the confidentiality of any student identifiable information on any of the documents that I reviewed and to do so, I requested the confidential information to be redacted prior to me receiving the documents from the schools. Participants were required to sign consent forms prior to participation in the study. Consent forms gave the participant the basic information about the study, who was conducting the study and why, and what safety measures were taken to protect them. A copy of the consent form is in Appendix C.

All research information was submitted to the IRB for review prior to conducting any fieldwork. This included the IRB application, interview protocols, forms of consent and information about storage of the data. Once approved by the IRB, I scheduled the interviews by contacting each participant by phone. I informed them of the nature of the research and if they agreed to participate, scheduled an interview at a convenient time and location.

I kept a locked file cabinet for storage of all recordings, documents, and or artifacts in my possession. Further, I maintained a password-protected file for any electronic documents, recordings, or artifacts. Research hard copy materials will be stored for five years in locked storage cabinet while digitally recorded information will be in a password protected file on a computer.

Researcher Positionality

Positionality or subjectivity can unduly influence the outcome of the study if one is not careful. Every researcher brings their own personal viewpoints, subjectivity, to the table when conducting a study. "Researchers' [make] a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). This means I interpreted the data through a lens that is unique to me as the researcher. I am an Assistant Special Education Director for a mid-size Midwestern school district. I have been in administration for five years. Prior to this I was a special education teacher for students with EBD. My experiences with students with EBD gave me a unique perspective into the education for this population but also could have become a point of bias, one of which I address below.

I first became interested in the suspension of students with EBD through an encounter I witnessed between a student with EBD and a school administrator. I began to wonder if the school administrator needed more tools to work with this particular student after I had conversations with the school administrator about the incident. I needed to work to minimize the influence my background brought into the study. Assistance and advice from my professors, my dissertation committee, and a peer reviewer gave me outside opinions that helped point out my personal bias. I used a peer to review or examine the data and debrief with me. This peer was

knowledgeable in the topic of education, administration, and the methodology (Merriam, 2009).

This helped to validate or question what I was finding and kept my personal bias from clouding

the results.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter cites the findings from the data collected through the interviews of 11 public school administrators from south central public schools in Kansas. It is structured around five themes that emerged from the data: (a) the experience and training the administrators received to prepare them for handling students with EBD, (b) training the administrators provide for their staff to help them manage these students, (c) the importance of building positive relationships, (d) the variations to the discipline approaches administrators chose for students with EBD, and (e) the behaviors that would warrant a suspension and alternatives to suspension for these students. School names, administrator names, and student names have been removed from quotes to protect the anonymity of the participants.

This study focused on public school administrators and the decisions they make about discipline for students with EBD. They were asked a series of questions and follow up questions about the topic. All the participants in the sample happened to be Caucasian. Of the 11 participants, only one was female, and she had more than 20 years of experience in public school administration. The remaining administrators were males who had between 10-30 years of experience. There were four administrators from the elementary level, three from the middle school level, and three from the high school level. District size differences were noted. The administrator from the smallest school had a district enrollment of 286 and the administrator from the largest school had a district enrollment of 5601.

Suspension/Expulsion Data of Participating Districts

In the state of Kansas, the IDEA State Performance Plan Public Report collects data on several indicators of school performance. Indicator 4A of this report is the Suspension and

Expulsion data for the state and is representative of all the school districts. The data in this indicator is recorded as a percentage. It is recorded in a chart that indicates the overall number of students suspended, number of students suspended based on race/ethnicity, disability, and if there is a discrepancy due to the policies, practices, or procedures. To better illustrate this two charts are used below. Note that each individual school cannot be represented individually due to the data being collected on the district level by the state. The categories across the bottom correspond to the indicators on the Kansas IDEA State Performance Plan Public Report. The report includes the following indicators:

- Indicator 1 graduation rate,

- Indicator 2 dropout rate,

- Indicator 3B-3C state assessment participation for math and reading,

- Indicator 5A LRE ages 6-21 in regular education classrooms at least 80% of the school day, 5B LRE ages 6-21 in regular education classrooms at least 40% of the school day, 5C ages 6-21 in a separate setting

- Indicator 6A ages 3-5 in a regular early childhood program and 6B ages 3-5 not regular early childhood program in a separate facility,

- Indicators 7A1 and 7A2 early childhood outcomes social /emotional, 7B1 and 7B2 early childhood outcomes knowledge, 7C1 and 7C2 early childhood outcomes appropriate behavior,

- Indicator 11 timely evaluations for special referrals,

- Indicators 12 transition from part C (birth to 3 program) to part B (early childhood),

- Indicator 13 secondary transition,

- Indicator 14A-C Post-School Outcomes,

- Indicator 4A suspension and expulsion,

- Indicator 4B suspension and expulsion by ethnicity,

- Indicator 9 suspension and expulsion by race/ethnicity,

- Indicator 10 suspension and expulsion race/ethnicity by disability.

Table 1 below is a representation of this information from the school districts that participated in this study. The percentage of each indicator reveals the districts that participated in the study are very similar. Districts B and D are the smallest districts. Districts below a certain size a represented with a 0 so as to not show exact numbers that might reveal a certain student because the N size is so small.

Table 1. Overall District Data

	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F	District G	District H
Graduation rate	80.36	0.00	88.14	0.00	60.71	75.00	73.08	65.00
dropout rate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.91	2.13	3.64	3.19
assessment participation	97.36	100.00	98.73	100.00	98.88	96.04	99.03	96.35
least restrictive environment participation	62.56	85.00	61.91	72.84	60.44	56.22	59.64	74.19
separate environment participation	3.29	0.00	2.77	2.47	1.37	2.70	3.61	2.69
regular early childhood	8.57	0.00	68.97	64.29	71.67	13.21	47.83	42.86
not regular early childhood in a separate facility	69.14	0.00	20.69	7.14	11.67	45.28	17.39	29.41

Figure 1 is a breakdown of the suspension and expulsion data from this same report. The number on the left side of the figure indicates the percentage of students who were suspended. All eight districts met state targets for the overall number of students suspended or expelled. As will be seen however, the school (District F) where the administrator stated that training the staff in behavior management techniques would be overwhelming to them because they already had so much other training to provide had the highest suspension rate out of all the schools with administrators who participated in this study.
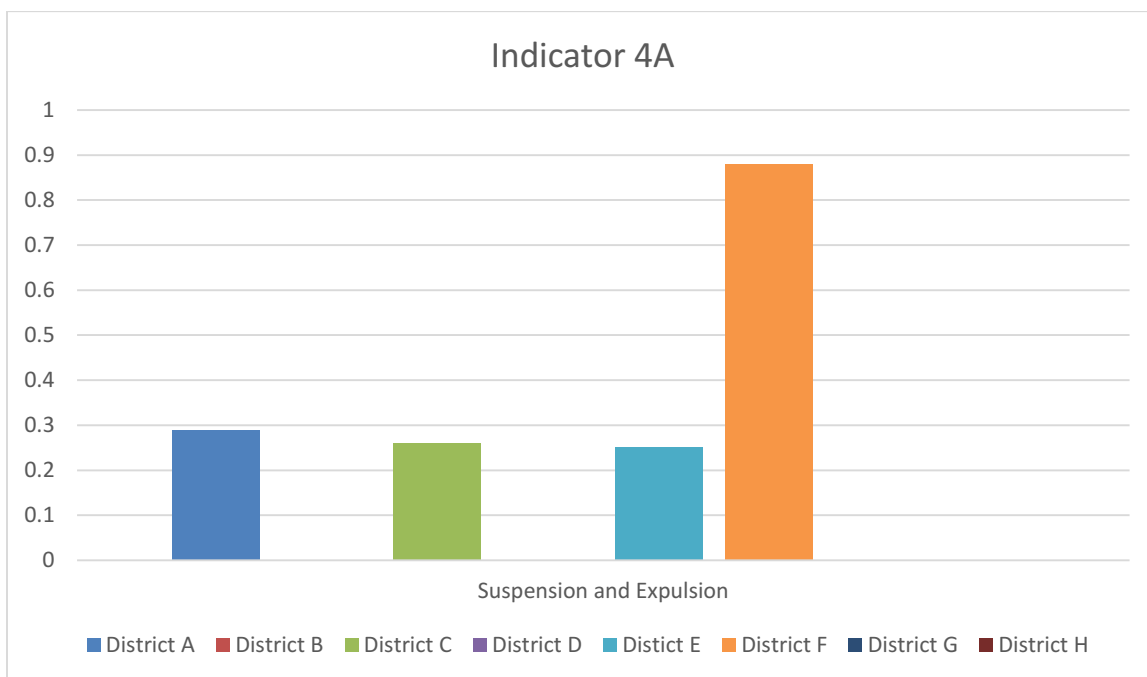
Figure 1. Suspension and Expulsion Rates

Figure 2 is summary of indicator 4B, which is answered with a Yes/No response to two questions. 1) Is there a significant discrepancy due to policies, practices or procedures in the suspension and expulsion of students based on ethnicity and 2) was the current year state wide target met? All eight school districts that had school administrators who participated in this research met the state target for the questions on significant discrepancy due to the policies, practices, or procedures.
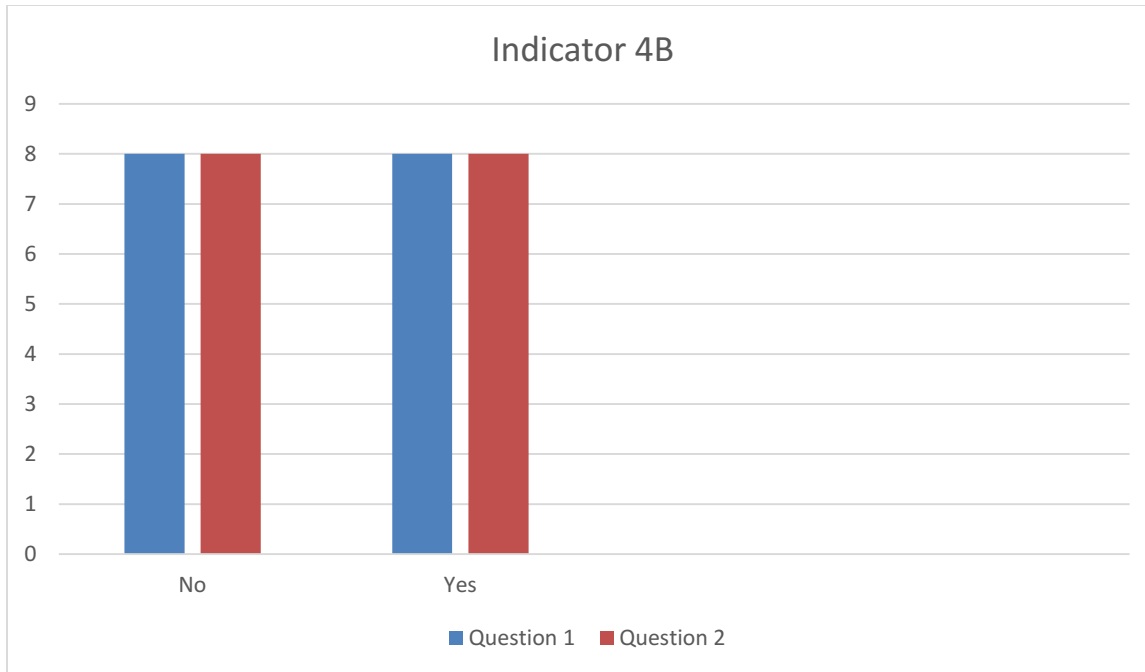
Indicator 4B

Figure 2 Discrepancies due to policies

Figure 3 presents the response to indicator 9 and 10, which is a Yes/No response to two questions. 1) Is there a significant disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification and 2) was the current year state wide target met? All of the school districts represented in this study met the statewide target for this indicator with regard to the representation on race/ethnicity and on disability.
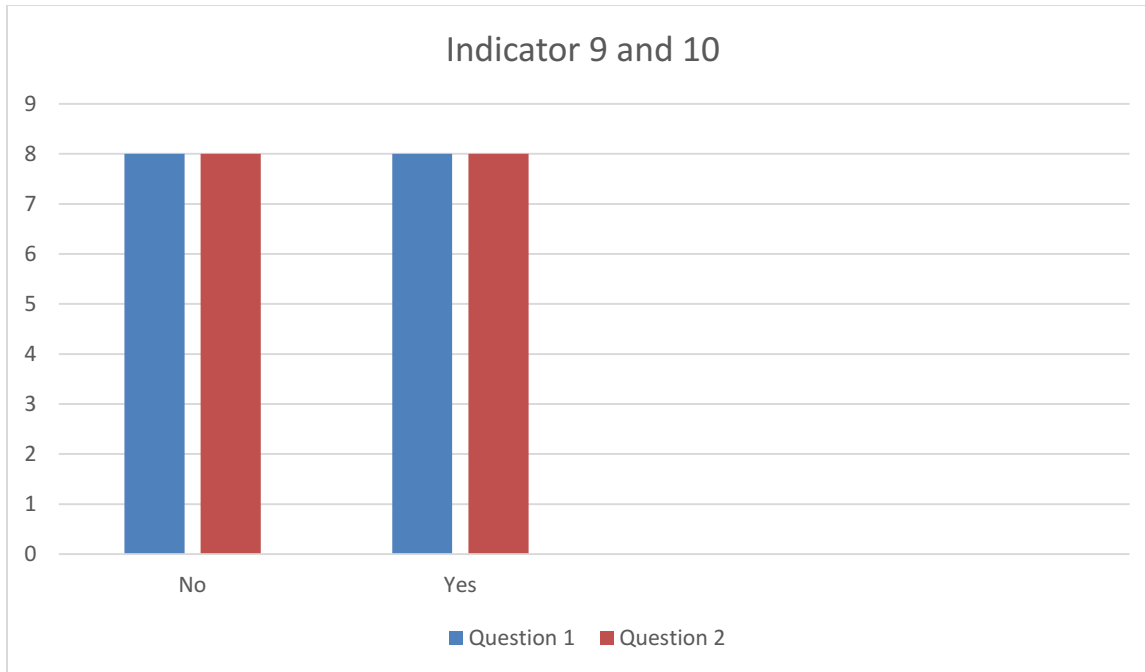
Figure 3. Proportional representation.

Coupling the state data with the documentation from each individual school further revealed that the majority of suspensions and expulsions were for physical violence or infractions against the drug/alcohol policies which includes smoking. This documentation supported what the interviews with the administrators indicated, that if the behavior was in direct violation to the school's policy of drugs or alcohol or as an act of physical aggression they would automatically suspend the student in almost every case.

Training for Administrators

Administrators were asked several questions about the amount, type, and usefulness of the formal training they received to prepare them for working with students with EBD. The questions were in reference to their undergraduate and/or graduate level course work. Responses varied in the amount of training they received prior to their positions in administration. This question was paired with one about how prepared each administrator felt about their role in the implementation of special education law. Follow up questions included questions about what

specific training they received that helped them to learn how to differentiate the discipline for these students and how they differentiate the discipline if they do. Discussed below are the themes identified from my analysis of the responses to the questions about the training these administrators received.

No Formal Training

Some administers said they had no prior formal training and were unprepared to make differentiated decisions about discipline for students with EBD. One administrator described his training on this topic as "none, zero, zilch, nada." This respondent laughed out loud when I asked the question and in turn asked me if I was kidding. He said there was not a special class about how to be an administrator to students who are not the typical student or who have special needs. Echoing this train of thought was a comment from another participant who also did not have any training in special education prior to becoming an Administrator. He said he "was not originally trained to be a special education teacher, it was not a required part of [his] program so [he] didn't get it." A follow-up question about how he felt about his training had prepared him for the decisions he was encountering led to this response.

> So, it's a little bit of a learning curve, I think when you come in and deal with those students, you know, they always tell you, "you got to treat everybody the same." But we aren't robots, ya know, and I have now come to disagree with that. You don't treat everybody the same because everybody's not the same. I was not prepared for that.

A common thread throughout the responses of individuals who had not received any training were statements of feeling unprepared to manage students with EBD in general and the majority had very little to no training on how to differentiate the discipline for these students.

Minimal Formal Training

While some administrators received no training on special education, other administrators stated they had some formal training from college or preparatory instruction as part of their administration preparation program. However, based on the responses, the training for these administrators was often limited to a brief overview of special education. For example, one administrator described his training by saying, "I probably had one class during the masters degree program." Two other participants stated they remembered something being mentioned about special education in general in a class or two during college but nothing specifically about dealing with the kinds of behaviors students with EBD exhibited. Many participants could not recall an exact training, which led to follow up questions asking how useful they felt that training was in light of their current positions. The usefulness of one class was called into question by more than one participant. For example, when asked about the training he received, an administrator said, "Zero. The only thing I had was in my regular education we had 'a' special education class and looking back that was a joke." This respondent painted the picture of the special education training as a subject discussed by a guest lecturer who was a school counselor and "didn't know what she was talking about." These administrators used words like, "steep learning curve" and "completely unprepared" to describe how they felt about how ready they were to make decisions for discipline of students with EBD. Administrators felt that colleges were not doing enough to prepare new administrators for the role in the area of differentiating for special education students, and especially not for kids who are EBD.

Learning On the Job

Some administrators talked about on the job experience as the only training they received to manage the behaviors of students who are EBD. On the job experience refers to working

directly with students with EBD without any prior experience and/or professional development provided by the district. One such administrator described his first couple of years as an elementary teacher. As the only male on staff he felt he was expected to quickly learn how to deal with EBD student behavior problems. He said, "being a male I was the go to guy…. It was just kind of, okay you're the guy, here we have a kid who is having issues. We need you to help work with them." This administrator commented that he was not formally trained in any kind of behavior management or special education law to help him know what to do. He did what he thought was right in his gut. Another administrator said, "No formal course taught me what I need to know to prepare me for a kid biting me, swinging at me, or anything." He mentioned that his district provided him with Mandt training as an administrator, which was the only training he has received on behavior management in a crisis situation. Mandt, Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), and Emergency Safety Intervention (ESI) were three on the job trainings mentioned by the participants (Kansas State Department of Education, 2016; Kemp, 2017; Lietzke et al., 2017). Mandt and CPI are commercial programs for conflict de-escalation that also include training in the use of seclusion and restraint (Kemp, 2017; Lietzke et al., 2017). ESI is the Kansas regulations for the use of seclusion and restraint (Kansas State Department of Education, 2016). Mandt, CPI, and ESI are not considered positive behavior support programs as they are used after a behavior occurs whereas PBIS is used both in prevention of negative behavior and support or recovery from behaviors. Table 2 shows the main components of Mandt and CPI.

Table 2 Mandt and CPI Main Components

Mandt	CPI
- Research/evidence based - Verbal de-escalation and conflict resolution - Crisis management - Individual dignity - Physical restraint used to maintain safety	- Research/evidence based - Verbal de-escalation and conflict resolution - Crisis management - Individual dignity

Prior Training and/or Experience

Some of the administrators had taught and/or worked with students with EBD prior to assuming an administrative position. Despite those experiences, these administrators did not feel they had an advantage over other administrators. They were, however, not surprised by some of the behaviors they were seeing in the students with EBD in their schools. One administrator described having initial training as a social worker, which he believed prepared him for EBD problematic behaviors. He shared, "My initial training was from my social work training. We have a lot of training about behaviors that comes with social work. So, I think I have been pretty well prepared for behaviors based on that." Another said he "taught in an EBD program for a residential youth facility and has worked in public schools as well. However, nothing that prepared me for what I walked into" as an administrator. While they did not feel they had an advantage in knowing what to do with students with EBD, these administrators shared that the prior experiences and training did give them some resources to pull from. They each talked about some strategies they would use based on the training they had received prior to becoming administrators, which will be discussed in a later section.

Training Administrators Provided to Staff

Administrators were asked about the training they provide to teachers and staff to prepare them for behavior management and working with students with EBD. Almost all interviewees referenced behavior management training as something that special education departments or cooperatives were responsible for providing. The majority of training provided in the schools represented in this research was designed for crisis intervention and de-escalation of behaviors. However, this was not something many administrators individually would have time to provide nor was it required for all teachers in the building.

Behavior Management Training is Not a Priority for All Staff

There is no question the job of deciding what training to provide for staff can take an administrator into several different directions. Many of the administrators interviewed felt there were too many other priority areas than behavior management for which they needed to provide training. An administrator offered, "You do what you can in terms of offering what they need as individuals but you also look holistically in terms of programming that is provided. For example, we do our seclusion, restraint, and crisis intervention trainings." As mentioned in the previous section, administrators provided Mandt, CPI, and/or ESI training to staff as a way to manage behaviors. These trainings were not provided for every teacher, however. According to one administrator, "Well, not everyone is Mandt trained. Obviously, the ones that are working with [students with EBD] are. We have a team of people that have gone through that." One administrator explained the lack of building wide professional development for behavior management like this, "It is like, okay, we are already putting so much on the teacher's plate, you start to crush them when you add behavior management." Consequently, some administrators do not provide any formal training to staff specifically about behavior management and working

with students with EBD. Another administrator echoed the sentiment there is limited amount of time and teachers are already overwhelmed,

> Well there is a finite amount of PD time built into the calendar. You have the common
> core, all the different testing that has to be discussed, district level strategy that has to be
> developed. There are a lot of things that have to be squeezed into that and so things get
> sacrificed.

This administrator is from the district whose data revealed the highest number of suspensions and expulsions of the districts with administrators participating in the study.

Some of the administrators remarked the special education cooperative or special education departments were in a better position to provide behavior management training to specific teachers. However, even they did not have enough time to provide training for the entire building or district. For example, one administrator said, "On the Special Ed side, they go to the co-op and they do get it. But collectively as a high school staff we don't have time for that." Another example came from an administrator who said, "The district provides mainly ESI training but the special education director also provides training for SPED teachers. I don't know how much they talk about positive behavior supports, but they would have better resources for that." Other administrators felt differently about the staff having training in behavior management. The description of the training they provided for staff is in the next section.

Behavior Management Training is a Priority for All

Some administrators felt training all teachers and staff on behavior management was a useful tool to help change the behaviors in the school as a whole. Some discussed the trainings they provided as a way of teaching the culture of their buildings and helping everyone know what behavior was expected. These administrators used a variety of methods for training the

staff, which ranged from relating personal stories to implementation of commercial behavior management curricula as school wide or district wide initiatives. For example, one administrator described some of his experiences with students with EBD to his staff and had discussions centered on alternative methods for managing the situation. Another described his school wide discipline policy and his choice of Love and Logic, a commercial parenting guide written by Jim Fay (Fay & Funk, 1995). He described using this as training for educators,

> When we opened [the new school building] we just started with three days of team building and just sharing the philosophies. As we started the conversation, it led to you know, when you go to someone's house they don't have a list of rules hanging on the refrigerator saying here is your consequence. So, we said how do we make it more of a family environment and treat kids like they are our own?

The other administrator chose the school discipline model of Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline is school wide discipline model that teaches discipline, social-emotional learning, and self-regulation through evidence-based strategies (Bailey, 2001).

Administrators Discipline Strategies for Students with EBD

Administrators were asked about the discipline strategies they chose for students who are EBD. Building positive relationships was a common response from the administrators during the interviews. Of the 11 administrators interviewed, all stated that building positive relationships directly impacted how they disciplined students with EBD. One mentioned that his building does not have a school wide discipline policy but instead uses positive relationships to teach the students to think about their behaviors. This is in fact the school wide discipline policy. He described how a positive relationship with a student can change the discipline, "you have to build a relationship with the kids. When you do discipline them, there is a sense of understanding and

fairness, that you have a good talk with them to correct the behavior." Talking with the student to build a relationship based on trust in order to change the behavior was echoed by another administrator who noted, "I believe I have to build relationships with them to establish adequate trust but also develop firm boundaries as well." When asked how to build these relationships, one administrator said,

> To a student who is Emotionally Disturbed, he needs to know above and beyond how much he is cared for. You know, whatever that is to make sure that he has an opportunity to connect with staff and peers. To make sure that he has an opportunity to bond above and beyond the same age peers.

One administrator mentioned their school wide discipline policy had a component built in that reinforced positive relationships with others and built pride in the school. He described it like this, "We treat each kid like they are our own so we went with conscious discipline of Love and Logic." This is not the same as the previously mentioned Conscious Discipline, however. Love and Logic teaches connecting logical consequences with behaviors to help students learn to make better choices (Fay & Funk, 1995). This administrator said that thinking about discipline matters through this lens helped his staff to create a unique set of school wide expectations. He went on to explain,

> Each classroom has its own classroom expectation and we have our school wide expectations. Every day we do our school family pledge that reinforces those ideas about being responsible for our own actions and taking care of others. It's incorporated really well. I think over the year I have had fewer discipline issues in this building than I have had in others.

The decision to provide behavior management training or to focus on building relationships as a means to manage behaviors led the conversations to the crux of the matter of how administrators make discipline decisions for students with EBD. The strategies they shared can be divided into two categories. The first is proactive strategies, those strategies that are in place to prevent the behaviors from occurring in the first place. The second is responsive strategies, those that are used after a behavior has occurred.

Proactive Strategies

The proactive strategies administrators described included using creative ways to help the students gain understanding that they belong in the school and are a part of its social culture. For example, a strategy referred to as "meaningful jobs" was used by one administrator to describe basic work tasks such as cleaning white boards, removing scuff marks from the floor, and picking up debris in the school yard and parking lot. These tasks were assigned to students who had an office referral. The administrator described a time when a student got some one-on-one attention while performing a meaningful job, which gave the administrator time to focus on the positive aspects and strengths of the student. He talked about some of the conversations he and the student had while performing a meaningful job. He said, "I use the time to help them learn that they are part of [school name] and that they matter." Other administrators described creative ways to provide the students with EBD alternative scheduling and positive reinforcement as a means to head off behavior challenges before they occur.

Several of the administrators said the discipline choices they would make actually began before any behavior ever occurred. They started with determining the background of the student, the relationship they had with the student, and the severity of past behaviors. They emphasized

the importance of relationship, giving opportunities for time out and positive reinforcement, such as providing the student with much needed attention. For example, one administrator reflected,

> I start with a positive relationship and a look at the child, sit down visit with the child, pick two or three targeted [behaviors] areas [to work on]. Provide time out throughout that system so they can just have a time out, away from the classroom. Working for the positives first and they don't lose them once you earn them. It's not stickers they want, they want to play basketball with you, they want to go on a walk with you, they want to just spend time with you visiting, eating lunch.

Rigid adherence to the policies was not on the list of strategies for one administrator who mentioned that he was willing to allow for minor dress code violations for a student who was EBD. He explained how a student walked right up to him in the morning and told him wearing pajama pants made her "feel awesome!" In describing this situation, the administrator smiled and reflected on the relationship he had cultivated with this student. Altering policy was discussed by two other administrators when they said their schools' discipline policies allowed for more natural consequences to behaviors such as missing a fun activity because school work was not completed or having to make restitution for hurting someone's feelings. One administrator noted that if he did not have a positive relationship with a student he would request help from a colleague who did have that positive rapport. His colleague would do the same for students for whom she did not have positive relationships. Some administrators used a mix of responsive and proactive strategies in order to give themselves the time needed to come up with alternative discipline.

Responsive Strategies

Responsive strategies included detention, in school suspension, cleaning tasks, natural consequences, and reflection time. Several administrators said they would choose discipline such as detention and in school suspension as needed based on their school wide discipline policy. One principal related a story about a student he was just starting to work with who came in to school on the first day and was in his office for a behavior referral before the first hour was over. He described the experience, "I had a student who on the first day he ripped my ceiling fan out of the ceiling. I was like, Wow, I have never seen that before. That is unique." Then he laughed at the memory. I asked him to describe the thoughts and feeling behind his actions on that day with that student. He walked me through his process that went from responding to being proactive with the eventual use of out of school suspension in order to buy time for appropriate behavior management planning with the IEP team. The administrator took the time to listen to the parents in the situation and did not make a snap decision based on his own agenda.

At his IEP it was recommended that he go to a day school. The parents didn't want him to go to a day school. They felt like the school had mishandled his behavior. I was like, "Well help me out then. Tell me what do you see then." They said that every time he hit someone or destroyed something automatically they would send him home. That is what he wants, is to be sent home. I told them that we could try the opposite of that. While that first day I did suspend him to figure out a plan, (laughs) I had to have some time to figure that out because he was a very intense young man, very strong. So, you were not going to have time to think that through and make something happen. So, I thought, okay we will go with detention. I can stay here until 10:00 at night if we need to. Um, we made it work. We talked to the parents about it and said okay when these things happen,

56

here is the plan to make it work and do you support that if he misses supper, he misses

supper for whatever that is. They [the parents] said "We will support you, we will

support you."

Thus, out of school suspension was used, in this case, to provide time for the administration and

the team to meet and make decisions on future discipline choices for this student. Another

principal used a private in school suspension when she described her responsive strategies as a

time to process what happened, "I use the conference room. It is isolated from the other kids

where they are going to have more reflection, more talking about it, more remodeling, more

social stories, to help them through this process." Instead of being with other students during in

school suspension, the student was allowed to go to a private room in the school in order to calm

himself down. A different administrator noted that the IEP drove his discipline decisions in

combination with the school's student handbook. He said, "Typically, I wouldn't vary much

from the IEP behavior plan or the student handbook, but I think the one thing I would allow is

more time to process my requests and time to recover in a positive manner." Giving time to

think about the situation can be a strategy used to help the administrator consider discipline

choices and help the student think about the behavioral choices he/she had in the situation.

However, there were some behaviors that every administrator felt warranted out of school

suspension.

Behaviors Resulting in Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Administrators work to keep their schools safe. Safety was the major theme revealed

when administrators were asked what would warrant a suspension from school. Several

administrators said that without a doubt an act of physical aggression or violence against a staff

person or other students would warrant suspension from school. However, some administrators

said they would try other avenues of discipline prior to suspension, if at all possible. They used

out-of-school suspension as a last resort. For example, they mentioned that if the student had a

behavior intervention plan, they would try to follow it first as a means of teaching a replacement

behavior and keeping the student in the building. Several administrators recognized that being

out of school was not the best option for students with EDB, especially if being sent home was

the student's goal. Therefore, some administrators stated that an out of school suspension might

depend on whether they felt the student was acting out as a possible means to be sent home. If

the administrator had a hunch this was the case, they would assign in school suspension in those

situations. One said, "Sometimes I think they're smart enough to know how to go home. But

they have been sent home before and I don't like to use that because it's not always a good

place." The administrator also acknowledged there was no educational benefit to the student not

being in school, as he went on to say, "Plus I can't teach them if they are not here." This

administrator described the socioeconomic make-up of his building and noted that sometimes

being at school was the only place a student might have food, running water, or heat. He was

willing to do almost anything to avoid suspension from school based on those circumstances.

Grounds for automatic OSS. Jeopardizing school safety and security was the

benchmark for automatic OSS. Several administrators referred to Dr. Randy Sprick's Safe and

Civil Schools work and indicated they would choose an out of school suspension option for

violations to the safety and security of the school environment. Safe and Civil Schools is a

collection of materials designed to help school personnel build behavior intervention plans,

develop school wide positive behavior support and interventions, create effective classroom

management, and implement better school improvement plans (Sprick & Daniels, 2010). In this

work, the authors reference what behaviors detract from safe and civil school environments and

provide guidance on how to best manage them for the good of the school community. For

example, one administrator said that bullying other students or creating a safety concern for the

students and staff would earn a suspension from school regardless of the disability of the student.

He would use out-of-school suspension,

> If there is a huge safety concern for, especially if it is targeted towards specific people.
>
> They are in the same class and there is one person that they continue to go after. I would
>
> treat that like a typical bullying situation and I would have to say I can't put this parent's
>
> child in danger because of this kid's behavior. I would suspend that kid no matter the
>
> label.

A few administrators stated they would not waver from the school discipline policy for students

with EBD. One of these administrators said, "Not going to be different than anybody else, the

student handbook is very clear on this." The administrator did acknowledge there were "more

specific guidelines we have to follow with IEP students once they have reached so many days of

suspensions." The legal guidelines this administrator was referring to are noted in chapter two of

this research. Other administrators shared the view they would follow the written policies for

safety violations that applied to all students. For example, an administrator explained the

circumstances in which he would apply an out-of-school suspension, which ranged from physical

violence to drugs to threatening language,

> That is one thing I am fairly consistent on. You know if you are fighting, the physical
>
> piece of it is a suspension. Drugs, which is not on the emotional side, but is an automatic
>
> suspension. Or getting into it really bad with a staff member. But really we haven't had,
>
> I mean the kids will say stuff. I mean we had one, it was just a really bad mix of kids in
>
> the classroom and this teacher, I mean he is an experienced special ed teacher. But this

kid you know threw the "f bomb" at him a couple of times so I ended up having to

suspend him.

Another administrator echoed this line of thinking with, "if you do something warranting a

suspension you are still suspended, or police referral whatever it might be. Safe schools'

violations are automatic." The administrator did not differentiate between the discipline choices

for students who are EBD and those students who are not identified if the students exhibited a

behavior that was a safe school violation. Out of school suspension was used by many

administrators to provide some space and time between the behavior of the student and the

school's response to the behavior. Some administrators felt out of school suspension provided a

buffer to allow them to plan for the future.

Alternative to Out-of-School Suspension

As noted above, all administrators stated that a violation of the physical aggression code

of conduct for their respective schools would warrant suspension. However, they also gave some

suggestions as alternatives to out of school suspension.

Relationship with the student can provide alternative discipline options. I refer back

to the previous example of the administrator who said he would try almost anything rather than

suspend a student. He noted that sometimes having a relationship with a student might prevent

the student from engaging in physically aggressive behaviors or other activities that would cause

major disruptions to the school day. As he builds a relationship with the students, he gets to

know them, what their family life is like, who their parents are, and the level of support the

students have at home. Here is the rest of his thought on the subject, "I am not a fan of

suspension. I don't think they are effective. My specific building is 100% free and reduced with

not a lot of parent engagement, repeated reports of abuse." This administrator shared his passion

for education with his wife who is a teacher in a neighboring district. He went on to say,

> I have three kids at home and nothing makes my three kids at home any more important
> than the kids that walk through my doors every day. My wife being in education, that is
> one thing that we share, that we hold true to.

Building relationships with students and knowing where they come from helped this

administrator think about alternative discipline strategies to out of school suspension. He went

on to say,

> It is hard for me to send a kid home to worse conditions than what we have at school.
> Knowing attendance is such a huge factor of education and success in schools and in
> community and life. We tend to see suspensions turn into three and four day absences. I
> am not one to speculate on why they don't come to school but that is a pattern that we
> tend to see.

He described some alternatives to out of school suspension he used to keep his students at

school. These included working on his relationship with those students in crisis situations and

using alternative settings such as sitting in his office for the day. In school suspension also

allowed him the time needed to talk with the student about the behaviors and further build the

relationship.

Another principal also described relationship as an alternative to suspending a student, as

long as the problematic behavior was not an act of physical aggression. He described a situation

in which he would have normally chosen suspension but because of his rapport with the student

he came up with an alternative plan.

I can recall an incident when a student was attempting to calm down and a teacher

confronted him for being in the hall. He yelled and cussed at the teacher and I had to

help calm him down. It was obvious the student had little control over his language, no

one was hurt, and other than the teacher's hurt feelings the consequences were minimal.

When he calmed down he was able to apologize to the teacher. I do not believe the

situation would have been the same had I not already been familiar with the student's

explosive anger and lack of self-control.

This administrator went on to note the strengths of students and importance of teaching pro-

social behaviors,

They are pretty awesome kids. All of them are. It isn't the way they think; it is just the

way they act. They need people to help them to understand that. We need to give them

the tools to help them understand that and be successful.

This administrator saw being proactive and teaching prosocial behaviors as better options for

students with EBD than out of school suspension.

In summary, the findings noted the minimal amount of formal training that administrators

received prior to becoming administrators. Consequently, not all of them felt they were prepared

for dealing with students with EBD in their administrative career. A few administrators who had

some training to work with students with EBD did not necessarily view that training as an

advantage over other administrators but admitted that they had some tools in the proverbial tool

box prior to assuming their current positions.

Training they provided for staff on management of behaviors ran the gamut from not

providing any training on positive behavior interventions to sharing personal experience stories

to implementation of commercial behavior management programs and techniques. Some special

education cooperative or directors were responsible for training certain staff on behavior management in some districts but in others, behavior management was a key training provided for all staff. Administrators did employ out of school suspension when it came to acts of aggression or violence from students with EBD, noting the safety of the school and its occupants was a key responsibility for them. However, alternative disciplines measures such as timeout, in school suspension, and natural consequences such as cleaning duties were used by some administrators for lesser offences. Finally, relationships between the staff and students were important to many administrators as they felt nurturing positive relationships helped to reduce behaviors in some cases. These findings led me to generate some conclusions about school administrator discipline decision-making for students with emotional behavioral disorders. The conclusions are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

Building level administrators are expected to manage a wide range of situations from providing support to teachers, to providing behavior management to students. Some students have special needs that make behavior management more challenging. As administrators work through the behaviors exhibited by student with EBD, they are making decisions about the discipline options available to them. The lens used to frame the study will be used to draw conclusions from the findings in this final chapter. The conclusions section of this chapter is divided into three themes based on the theoretical framework discussed in chapter one. Those themes are single-loop decisions, double loop decisions, and governing values that impact the decisions made by the principals for discipline of students with EBD.

Administrators Use of Single-loop Decision-Making

Recall from chapter one the discussion of single-loop learning and the example of the thermostat. Research from studies on decision-making suggests that some decisions made by managers are automatic in response to an event just like a thermostat automatically adjusts the temperature in the room (Argyris, 1991). Single loop decision-making is useful when a person needs to respond to a situation or make a decision very quickly. For example, when a person touches something hot and jerks their hand away. Another example might be when someone has been verbally aggressive in the past so one avoids eye contact or pretends not to see that person upon the next encounter. These responses are meant to keep one from getting hurt. Figure 4 below represents single loop decision-making of three behaviors and three responses that escalate. It is represented by a linear series of filled circles because the single-loop process is linear, this-then that type of response.
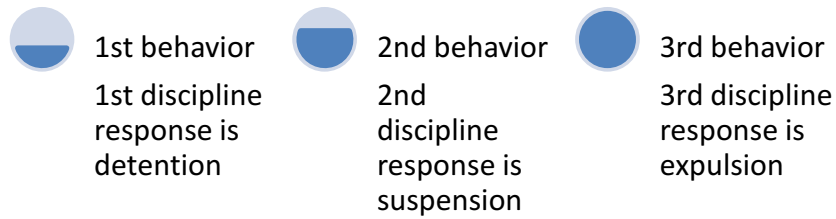
1st behavior   2nd behavior   3rd behavior

1st discipline response is detention   2nd discipline response is suspension   3rd discipline response is expulsion

Figure 4. Single loop decision-making

In some instances, a quick decision on a discipline choice is needed and thus a single loop decision is a go to tool to use for administrators. In this study, single loop decisions could be seen in the emphasis on school safety, lack of differentiation in discipline decisions between general education and students with EBD, and lack of training provided for staff.

School Safety Codes Prompted Single Loop Decisions

The participants chose an automatic response of out of school suspension for behaviors that were direct violations of the school safety code. Take for example, the thermostat Argyris (1991) used to illustrate single loop learning. It does not think about what will happen the next time the temperature in the room falls below the specified setting or rises above the setting. It just turns on and turns off. There were some administrators whose discipline decisions were similar to this in that they chose an automatic response and did not use the time that students were suspended from school to make any adjustments in the environment, curriculum, or strategies used for the student.

It was surprising, however, to find that for some administrators, the automatic response to a violation in school safety was not as cut and dried as the theory suggests. Some administrators stated they would use out of school suspension for an act of violence no matter how aggressive it was, whereas other administrators said it would depend on the degree or severity of the act that

would play into the decision-making process. According to the theory, this would in fact be a critical shift from a single-loop mindset to a double-loop mindset because the administrator took into account the severity of the act of aggression, reflected on the behavior, and the disciplinary options prior to making decision. It is reassuring that these administrators are taking into consideration the degree of severity of an event in order to make decisions about discipline for students with EBD. They could go a step further and examine the causes and preventive measures as well, which would move them further into double loop decision-making.

Lack of Differentiation of Discipline for Students with EBD

Another example of single-loop decisions for discipline comes from the administrators who said they did not do anything different in terms of discipline for students who were EBD than they would for the general education students. This is an example of single-loop because it is a form of a one-size-fits all, automatic response. Research shows that students who are EBD do not process the response to an upsetting event or the consequences to behaviors the same way as their non-identified same age peers. Thus, giving them the same discipline does little to change the behaviors (McLaughlin et al., 1994; Pearce, 2009). Zero tolerance policies are also ineffective at changing the behaviors of students who are EBD. These policies are a clear example of single loop decision-making because they force the administrator into an if/then situation, if the student does this, then this is the punishment. There is no room for double loop decisions. Further, research (K. R. Evans & Lester, 2012) has revealed that suspension and expulsion do not significantly change behaviors for any student because it interrupts the opportunity for teaching replacement behaviors. Additionally, if students are not present at school, they are unable to benefit from the academic programming. The administrators who do not differentiate discipline for the students with EBD are not helping these students to learn why

their behavior was a problem or what they should do differently next time. They are missing out on an opportunity to build a relationship with a student. These administrators are also missing out on an opportunity to not only impact change on the behaviors in their school in future but also help the student to learn how to make a better choice for his/her own future well beyond the school doors.

Lack of Training Provided to Staff about Behavior Intervention

Single-loop decision-making was further evidenced by administrators who felt that providing their staff with training on behavior management would overwhelm the staff and by those administrators who indicated behavior management training was not a priority. Not providing the staff with training on proactive behavior management strategies leaves the staff vulnerable to making automatic decisions about the behaviors they encounter. Staff who are not trained in how to intervene in problematic behaviors before they are at a crisis level are at a disadvantage. The students are also at a disadvantage because they are not given an opportunity to learn replacement behaviors. Teachers may send students to the office for the administrator to deal with the behaviors that the teachers could have managed if they were given training on proactive strategies such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports.

<center>**Administrators Use of Double-loop Decision-Making**</center>

Some of the administrators used the out of school suspension of the students, not as a punishment, but as a time to think about how to potentially prevent behaviors from occurring again and to chart their next course of action for addressing behaviors in the future. This is an example of double-loop decision-making. While the initial response of suspension from school is a single-loop automatic response, the consideration of the future response to the behavior and the prevention of the behavior is double-loop decision-making. Double loop occurs when one

<center>67</center>

thinks about an event or problem from various angles, tries various solutions, and tests the results of the solutions. In this section, I discuss how administrators used double loop decision-making to assist them in changing the behaviors of students with EBD in their schools through fostering cultural change. Figure 5 below represents double loop decision-making where the culture of the school, people in the school, and the policies work in relationship with each other. It is represented with a gear figure because they all work in harmony together and double loop learning/decision-making requires a person to turn through the information, policies, and data to make the decisions and they have to repeat this process more than once.

Figure 5 Double loop decision-making
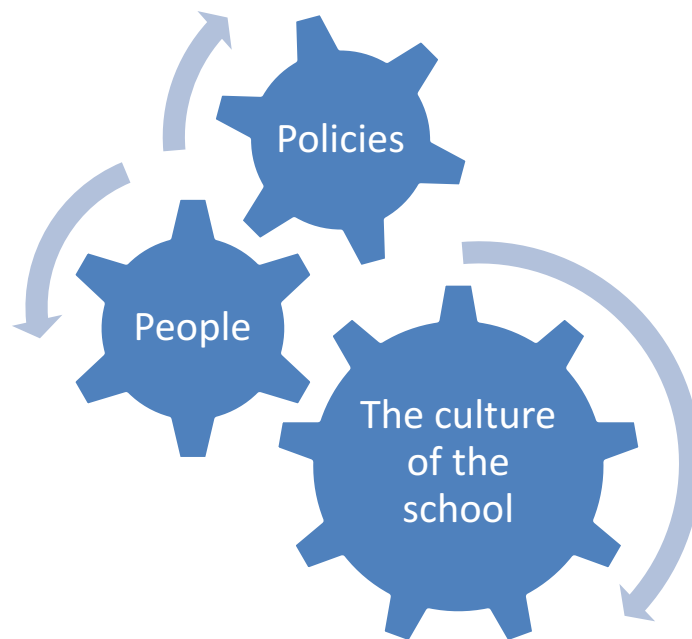
Discipline of a student with EBD takes more than policy and procedures manuals. Double loop decision-making helps facilitate relationships that can change the behaviors but could also impact the whole child and their future. For this study, double look decision-making manifested as relationships between students with EBD and staff members and adjusting school discipline policies.

Relationships Facilitate Double-loop Decision-Making

Relationships was a key term that many of the administrators used to describe how they approached their discipline strategies. The very nature of a relationship is double loop. When a student feels a part of the culture of the building they are more likely to succeed both behaviorally and academically. The administrators employed some proactive strategies such as building a relationship with the students and helping them learn the difference between the inappropriate behavior and behavior that would have been a better choice. Building these relationships takes time and investment on the part of the administrator. For example, they have to learn the students' names, backgrounds, home stories, and the administrator has to think about that information when he/she needs to make decisions about discipline. The administrator uses data from previous encounters with the student both formally through the school discipline records and informally by thinking about conversations they have had in the hallway, how the student has acted or appeared recently. One administrator said that these informal observations told him a lot more about his students than he learned from meetings with them when they needed discipline. Relationship building helped the administrator process through the double loop decision-making when it comes to discipline of his students with EBD.

Classroom wide and school wide discipline based on the relationship with the students with EBD can be effective in long lasting change of their behaviors (Eber, Lewis-Palmer, & Pacchiano, 2002). In his research, Argyris (1994) demonstrated how relationships between management and employees made a difference in how employees felt about their job and purpose for being at work. The same holds true for education. Students who feel they have a meaningful relationship with a staff member at school are more likely to follow rules and be engaged in learning (Eber et al., 2002). Conversely, students who do not feel like they have a

meaningful relationship hold no stock in the environment or situation and thus are less likely to follow rules, and are more likely to have poor grades, increased dropout rates, and increased suspension and expulsions. Meaningful relationships, however, does not mean that every student gets the exact same thing as every other student; instead every student gets what they need. Administrators can make small changes to daily routines such as implementing strategies that can make big differences, such as PBIS and career planning (Benitez, Lattimore, & Wehmeyer, 2005; C. Evans & Weiss, 2014). For example, training the teachers to change the way they give praise can change the behavior in the classrooms, halls, cafeterias, and thus the buildings (Allday et al., 2012). This is a simple training that would cut down on the workload of teachers, increase task completion and grades for students, and decrease negative behaviors administrators are managing. But it requires an administrator who is willing to take a second look at his or her building and demonstrate double loop decision-making when it comes to discipline.

Adjustment to the Discipline Policies

Adjusting school discipline policy to include creative behavior intervention strategies is another example of double-loop decision-making. There are several commercial school wide behavior curriculums that some administrators chose to incorporate into their policies. The purpose of these programs is to help foster a school culture in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where all are welcome, and where a mistake is just a mistake and not the end of the world. School administrators who buy into this way of thinking work to create a relational school culture and have the freedom to make thoughtful decisions about behaviors. These proactive strategies become part of the school culture and are taught to each staff member and child. Changing the culture of the school to a respectful, relationship building community can

eliminate some behaviors from occurring. However, this requires double loop decision-making to first see what is happening, then analyze and think about the options and what needs to change, implement a change, and finally evaluate whether that change is working. Administrators may have to repeat this process more than once to make it part of the culture and second nature to everyone. The results can decrease behavior problems. When students feel like they belong they are less likely to vandalize and destroy property. Students who feel a sense of community are more likely to have positive feelings about being at school (C. Evans & Weiss, 2014). Further, the freedom of the administrator to choose a consequence that fits with the needs of the student helps to build the relationship between the student and the school staff.

Governing Values

Recall from chapter one the discussion on the four basic governing values "to remain in unilateral control, to maximize 'winning' and minimize 'losing,' to suppress negative feelings, and to be as 'rational' as possible" (Argyris, 1991, p. 103). These governing values can cause a person to become stuck in the single loop decision-making rut. Consider each one as a blinder that prevents the administrator from seeing alternative approaches to problem solving. For example, if the administrator values remaining in unilateral control, he or she may miss the opportunities to take into account the expertise of other professionals around him or her. Suppressing negative feelings sounds good on the surface because most people do not want to address negative feelings. However, this governing value does not allow relationship building because in a relationship there are times when one party will have a negative feeling. If not addressed the relationship is easily broken.

These values became evident when some of the administrators described the reasons for their actions. Those who did not provide staff with any training on behavior management were

in unilateral control of the discipline for students who were referred to the office. The administrators who chose to implement some crisis management training but did not build relationships were maximizing winning for themselves and minimizing losing but were not willing to give up the control of the discipline decisions. In some situations, this governing value could become more about controlling others or forcing students to comply. Refusing to give up control over another person may feel like maintaining the upper hand and winning, when in reality, it is creating a no win situation.   Exerting control over another person will not help that person learn to control him or herself.

Argyris and Schon (1974) proclaimed these governing values block people from talking about important issues and keeps them in a single loop mindset often being expressed through a theory in action verses a theory in use. Recall from chapter one the theory in action is the way that we say we will act when confronted with a situation but the theory in use in the way we actually act when a situation occurs. Also keep in mind that single loop decision-making keeps people from being aware of inconsistency between their theory of action and theory of use. The movement from single loop to double loop decision-making is possible if administrators can suppress the governing values and stick to their theory in action (Argyris, 1995). An example of an administrator using theory in action was the one who said he had students do meaningful jobs around the school when they exhibited inappropriate behaviors. He often would work alongside the student and talk to them as they worked. These discussions do not suppress the negative feelings but actually highlight them and allow both parties to understand the function of the student's behavior and participate in the double loop decision-making process. The conversations help the student to learn that everyone has negative feelings sometimes and that it is important to deal with them and talk it out. This governing value of suppression of the

negative feelings to save face helps to prevent embarrassment and hide a weakness whereas the double loop choice is to reveal the feeling, deal with it, and grow past it. This discipline decision not only teaches the student that what he/she did was not allowed but also that he/she is still accepted and that the behavior does not have to define them. This example of double-loop decision-making take a lot of time out of the schedule for the administrator but it is worth it when it helps the student to choose better behaviors in the future.

Implications

As building administrators work to build better learning environments, meet state standards, and reduce misbehaviors, several administrators look for answers in research. This research has some ideas for encouraging school administrators to rethink their decision-making about disciplinary policies for students with EBD and day to day practice. The bottom line is the double loop decision-making process sheds light into the hidden corners of the problem. This extra processing of problems allows the administrator to take the time to build the relationships, consider all the angles, think about creative solutions and implement alternative plans and policies via a deeper look into the theory-in-use and their espoused theory that would not be possible with single loop thinking (Bochman & Kroth, 2010).

Implications for Policy

Administrators look for methods to assist in behavior management in their school. A particular set of students with behavior needs that must be considered individually, students with EBD require differentiated behavior management strategies (C. Evans & Weiss, 2014). One of the first steps in the process is to examine the disciplinary policies in place at the building level to ensure they are aligned with and identify contradictions to special education policies and laws. Zero tolerance policies for example, do not teach replacement behaviors and back the

administrator into a corner with only one disciplinary option (K. R. Evans & Lester, 2012).

These policies are created with the need for control of the students and for the governing values in mind through the single-loop decision-making (Argyris, 1993). Administrators who employ double-loop decision-making however, are thinking outside the box, making conscious decisions to be creative problem solvers, and find solutions to not only the current situation but future problems as well through reflection and continuous learning. They become lifelong learners by cycling through the information, making judgements on decisions and consequences, planning for future encounters with the students, and bringing more of their own personalities to the their work (Argyris, 1991). School administrators who use double loop decision-making are not tied to a standard policy but feel free to make decisions and try something new, to experiment and analyze the results, to build relationships with students and staff, and work fluidly with the discipline policies for the best outcomes for all involved. They are free to create learning environments that are safe and secure but not tied to the policies that give a feeling of being set in stone.

Implications for Practice

Another critical component for administrators in discipline decision-making for students with EBD is understanding special education and the inclusion of special education students. This has been challenging for administrators and teachers for a long time (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). The laws have not always been interpreted and/or applied the equally from school to school or district to district. However, administrators have the burden of upholding the laws and providing for the education of students with special needs even if they do not fully understand the laws they are to implement (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). Administrators could implement programs that focus on changing the student behaviors and

provide staff training in behavior management strategies and double-loop decision-making (Dupper et al., 2009). Programs such as in school suspension, positive behavior supports and interventions, and alternative educational settings have all helped students return to the educational settings without being suspended or expelled. Teaching staff to understand the purpose behind the behavior and to think about the underlying communication will help them to better be able to assist the students when the behaviors are occurring (McAdamis, 2007). Building relationships, building communication skills, and teaching behavior management are key components to helping students with EBD overcome their disability. All of this requires administrators who are willing to think outside the box, set aside the governing values and change some of the old practices that are proven to be ineffective.

Administrator Preparation Programs

Several of the administrators who participated in the study stated they had little to no experience with students with EBD prior to becoming administrators. They also stated they had no additional training on disciplinary tactics for students with EBD when they took the position. This research demonstrates a clear need for administrators to have training in differentiating discipline for students who are not identified as special needs and for those who are identified. Training in programs such as PBIS would be good for administrators to better understand how to manage behavior in general not only in the realm of special education (Eber et al., 2002). This training should be provided in the administrative preparatory programs at the college and university level. These programs and the practicum experiences can provide both the academic and rich experiences needed to prepare the new administrators for their positions. Yet the participants in this research stated they did not feel prepared to make decision about discipline for students with EBD and that seems to fit with prior research (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). In

their research, Mendels and Mitgang pointed to similar findings of university programs being "out of touch with district needs and leaving graduates ill-prepared to lead." (p. 24). University and school district leaders need to begin to work together and have open lines of communication so that the administrators of tomorrow are ready for what they will face in their careers when it comes to discipline decisions for students with EBD.

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APPENDIXES

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Educational and School Psychology

Appendix A

School Administrator Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Charla Heddin. I am in the Educational Leadership Doctoral program at Wichita State University. I am here today to conduct an interview with you in regard to discipline of students with Emotional Behavioral Disturbance. You were selected to participate in the study because you have experience supervising educational programs for students with disabilities in this district.

Before we begin, I would like to share with you some guideline for our discussion. First, although we will be on a first name basis, I will not be using your name in any of the results of the study. Our interview will last approximately 60 minutes and you can feel free to decline to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. With your permission I would like to record our conversation today to ensure accuracy of the information that is shared. The recordings will be maintained in a secure location and destroyed after five years. *(Review the consent and get signature).*

1. Tell me about your educational background. How long have you been in education? In administration?

2. What training did you have with students with EBD prior to becoming a school administrator?

3. Let me give you this hypothetical situation. There is a 5th grade student who is categorized as EBD. He has been sent to the office repeatedly for talking out in class this

week but today he has been to the office for a discipline referral for refusal to comply

with directions from staff. The school administrator has issued a 30 min detention and

talked to him about the expectations in the classroom. After returning to the classroom

the student finds the classmates have gone to recess without him. He tips over his desk

and throws his materials around the room hitting the teacher with his pencil. She calls

the office to have the administrator come to her room. The administrator suspends the

student for violence for 2 days. What might you do differently?

4. Think about the school discipline policy. Describe a time when you might vary the

   discipline from the policy for a student with EBD

5. How do you reflect on your decisions for discipline? How do you know if it was

   effective?

6. What is your philosophy about inclusive education for students with disabilities?

   a. What educational settings and programs do you have for students with EBD?

7. What strategies do you use in working with students with EBD?

   a. Talk about when a behavior intervention plan needs to be implemented, reviewed,

      and/or adapted.

8. What professional development or training do your teachers receive regarding helping

   student with behavior concerns?

9. How do you define a "successful" student with EBD? What does "success" look like for

   your students who are EBD?

10. What does it take for a student with EBD to be suspended? Expelled?

11. What else do we need to know about students with EBD in your school?

Appendix B

Document Protocol

Department of Educational Leadership

Campus Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142

Artifact and Document Protocol

School: _____

Reviewer Initials: _____   Date:_____

Type of Review: Artifact   Document

Title or Name of Artifact/Document:

Describe the artifact/document:

What are you looking for in this document or artifact?

What did you find in this document or artifact?

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Appendix C

School Administrator Consent Form

Purpose: You have been selected to participate in a research study of school administrators'
decision-making for discipline decisions for students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders. I
hope to learn insight into decisions to use suspension and expulsion as a discipline measure.
Participant Selection: You were selected as a possible participant for this study because are a
school administrator in state of Kansas with knowledge and experience working with students
with EBD. Approximately 10-15 participants were selected from the list of administrators in the
Kansas Educational Directory.
Explanation of Procedures: If you decide to participate, your participation will consist of one
interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. With your permission the interview will be
recorded to ensure accuracy of note taking and allow for detailed recall of information shared.
The study is about students with EBD, so the questions I will ask will center of educational
placement, discipline, decision-making, and perceptions you have of these students. Questions
such as, "what training did you have with students with EBD prior to becoming a school
administrator?" and what is the discipline policy for student in this school?" will be included.
Discomfort/Risks: There are minimal risks associated with your participation in the study.
Please feel free to be open with your responses. I will keep your responses confidential and there
are minimal risks to you. If you feel uncomfortable or wish to stop the interview at any time you
are free to do so.
Benefits: Participating in this research study will help other educators to gain insight into
educational placement, discipline, decision-making, and perceptions of administrators in working
with students with EBD. Further, participants have the opportunity to be heard and voice their
opinions. Others might benefit as well from this study, as I plan to present the results at future
training opportunities for administrators such as at state and national conferences and
publications in scholarly journals.
Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential.
However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances
where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the researchers
permission to share information about you with the following groups:
- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory
  agencies; and
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board

The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group
results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.
No names or other identifiable information will be used in the results of this study. Information
obtained will be sorted, coded, and themed for the analysis. All data, recordings, documents, or

other related materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years and then destroyed.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will <u>not</u> affect your future relations with Wichita State University. If you choose to participate in the study you are free to withdraw or refuse to participate at any time before during or after the interview process as participation is completely voluntary.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at Charla Heddin, 620-217-1686, cheddin@gmail.com or Dr. Jean Patterson at:
316-978-6392 or jean.patterson@wichita.edu, Educational Leadership Department, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0142. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____
Printed Name of Subject

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

_____
Printed Name of Witness

_____   _____
Witness Signature   Date