A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL CULTURE ON A POSITIVE DISCIPLINE PROGRAM

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Gary Wetzel, who taught me the importance of a good

education, the benefit of hard work, and the value of a loving and supportive family –

who, still to this day, is the smartest man I've ever known

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.

- Haim G. Ginott

A person's a person, no matter how small.

- Dr. Seuss

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined the school culture of an urban elementary school and the implementation of a school-wide positive discipline program. Focus groups, interviews, observations and document review were used to understand the existing culture and gather perceptions from staff members and students regarding their opinions of the adopted program. The study used Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture and Nodding's (Noddings, 2005) theory of educational caring as the theoretical framework. The staff members and principal desired to implement a positive discipline program in order to find a better way to discipline students that would preserve student dignity and teach students alternatives to inappropriate behavior. The Effective School Discipline program was chosen to be implemented schoolwide, and all staff received training in the use of this program. Although teachers cared about students and voiced their desire to respond to student misbehaviors in a positive manner, the implementation of Effective School Discipline was not successful due to a school culture which did not allow for professional dialogue or risk-taking to occur. A significant level of distrust existed between the principal and the teachers which hindered the program's effectiveness. Although the implementation of Effective School Discipline did improve some teacher/student interactions on a limited scale, the programs misuse or nonuse by most staff members reflected the underlying assumptions which existed at the school's deepest cultural levels. The findings of this study suggest that a healthy school culture is cornerstone to successful school reform. School leaders should work towards creating schools which have collaborative professional learning communities, distributed leadership models, and a high level of trust among all stakeholders in the organization.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As schools struggle to implement reforms and programs to improve student performance, the idea of changing *school cultures* into collaborative and caring professional learning communities has come to the forefront of numerous strategies. A school-wide positive discipline program is one strategy schools are adopting to promote a positive culture (Muscott, Mann, & Benjamin, 2004; Sugai & Horner, 2002). The underlying culture of a school can propel a reform movement towards a successful outcome or doom the reform initiative for failure even if the reform is seen as needed or necessary (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Senge et al., 2000). The school's culture is the organization's most enduring aspect centering itself around the artifacts, assumptions, values and beliefs held by all stakeholders, and greatly affects everything that occurs within the organization, including the implementation of a school-wide initiative such as the use of a positive discipline program (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Schein, 2004; Senge et al., 2000). The way in which teachers and students interact during a discipline event contributes to the overall culture of the school. School-wide discipline programs contradict most school cultures where each teacher is expected to deal with student discipline problems in the privacy of his or her own classroom. A school-wide discipline program can provide consistency of expectations and consequence delivery amongst staff members. However, discrepant opinions on what should be expected of students and the level of consequence appropriate for a given misbehavior creates problems in a school whose culture is not truly collaborative. Teachers in a non-collaborative school will disagree about expectations and consequences which leads them to prefer the *behind closed doors* method of disciplining students.

Positive discipline programs have been implemented over the past few decades in an effort to manage student behavior while, at the same time, teaching students the social skills needed to be successful members of society. A program is considered to be positive if it focuses more on emotional support, modeling expected behaviors and responses, and using the situation as a teaching opportunity versus extolling punitive consequences and negative talk (Strahan, Cope, Hundley, & Faircloth, 2005). These positive aspects often result in a stronger relationship being built between the teacher and student (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Americans today want to know their students are not only learning in a safe and productive environment, but also want school staff to work hard to support all students and make personal connections with them through relationship building and encouragement (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010). These positive relationships lead to improved behavior and higher academic achievement as students gain a feeling of self-respect and self-worth (Pigford, 2001; Strahan et al., 2005). However, many people in the public also judge the effectiveness of schools based partly on the management of student behavior (Marzano et al., 2003) which provides a glimpse of the overall school culture.

To compound the issue, teachers in classrooms today cannot simply focus on controlling student behavior. They are also expected to redirect inappropriate behavior, increase students' academic achievement, build their self-esteem, teach them positive character traits, counsel them, and motivate them to be productive members of society. A variety of solutions have been studied during recent years, and researchers agree a common component to the successful resolution of the challenge stated above is recognizing that a positive teacher/student relationship is critical to the social, emotional, and academic well-being of children (Ang, 2005; Marshall, 1998; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Noddings, 2005; Payton et al., 2008; Strahan et al., 2005; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Wentzel, 2003). Successful teachers take time to build strong and caring

relationships with their students. Although most people would agree teachers *care* about their

students, teachers today are not well versed in how to develop authentic caring relationships with

children and more specifically, how to bring a caring perspective into their classroom, much less

throughout the school (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 2005).

Research Problem

Classroom management and student discipline remain one of the biggest struggles for

new and experienced teachers alike. Student discipline is ranked as the number-one complaint

teachers have about their jobs (Zehm & Kottler, 1993), and teachers generally believe they are

unprepared to deal with most types of disruptive behaviors (Marzano et al., 2003). New teachers

often lack the skills to manage a classroom of students effectively and ultimately will revert to

how they were disciplined as children, which is traditionally based on negative consequences.

Student behavior is cited by many educators as a leading cause of teacher stress (Clunies-Ross,

Little, & Kienhuis, 2008). This heightened stress leads to burnout and ultimately the loss of

teachers from the profession (Beaman & Wheldall, 2000).

These individual teacher challenges are often seen on a school-wide level. Schools

struggle to implement school-wide discipline programs which address student behaviors in a

systemic way while still supporting and encouraging the positive teacher/student relationships

critical to student success. These school-wide programs are difficult to implement effectively if

the culture of the school does not allow for new initiatives to take root and grow (Deal &

Peterson, 1999; Senge et al., 2000).

For the purpose of this study, it is important to delineate the difference between the terms

classroom management and *discipline*. Classroom management encompasses all that is required

to run an effective and successful classroom (Marzano et al., 2003). This includes, but is not

limited to, discipline. Other aspects of classroom management might include furniture

arrangement, procedures for handing out materials, passing in papers, or requesting to go to the

restroom. It also includes effective use of transition time between activities within the room and

teacher expectations for what students should do when they are finished with an assigned task

(Little & Akin-Little, 2008). Classroom management could be viewed as an overarching

umbrella and discipline is one category beneath it.

Whereas classroom management is primarily the responsibility of the teacher, discipline

is primarily the responsibility of the child. Discipline deals with appropriate and inappropriate

behavior. The teacher is responsible for maintaining a safe and orderly environment that

supports learning, but the child is responsible for his own behavior. If a teacher constantly takes

on the role of disciplinarian and doles out consequences or punishments without the student's

input, the student is deprived of the opportunity to take ownership of his own behavior and

become responsible for that behavior (Marshall, 2005). The classroom management techniques

employed by a teacher have a great deal to do with establishing the culture of that classroom.

Students quickly gain an understanding of "how things are done around here" through the use of

various management strategies by the teacher.

It is also important to define what is meant by *school-wide* discipline versus *teacher-

selected* discipline. In a school-wide setting the school leadership, regardless of whether it is a

single person or a leadership team, selects a discipline program to use with *all* students by *all*

staff members. Staff members are trained on how to implement the program, and every staff

member in the building is expected to implement the chosen program (Hagan-Burke et al.,

2005). The rationale behind a school-wide program is that students know what to expect from

all staff members in response to misbehaviors, regardless of the position of the adult dealing

directly with the behavior (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003). Consistency is the goal for everyone so one staff member is not considered overly lenient while another might be considered overly strict. When teachers are left to decide their personal discipline program within their classroom, they are given the freedom to be as lenient or strict as they see necessary. A school-wide program also prevents discipline from being solely the responsibility of the principal. School-wide programs typically affect the culture of the building as a whole, versus the culture within each classroom (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Although many educators agree effective student discipline is based on positive and supportive feedback (Clunies-Ross, et al., 2008), studies show teacher behaviors, when dealing with student discipline, do not support this statement. Teachers are more likely to respond to student discipline events with negative feedback and reprimands (Merrett & Wheldall, 1986). Schools that have implemented positive discipline programs and view discipline as an additional learning opportunity for students have seen behavior problems decrease while academic achievement and social skills increase (Marzano et al., 2003; Zins, 2004; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). In positive discipline schools, students feel respected and have the opportunity to learn and practice the desired skills. Teachers in these schools are less likely to escalate behavioral situations in a negative way because they approach discipline as an additional curricular area (Noddings, 1988, 2005). The research strongly suggests student discipline programs are most effective when positive, proactive approaches are used (Herrera & Little, 2005; Wheldall, Houghton, & Merrett, 1989; Wilks, 1996).

If many schools are finding success with positive discipline programs, then why do not more schools use discipline programs that focus on relationship building, especially when these are tied to the *holy grail* of increased student achievement? There are several possibilities why

this discrepancy is occurring. First, teachers tend to use the discipline program with which they are most familiar. For many, this is what they themselves experienced as students because some teacher preparation programs do not adequately teach new teachers how to implement effective classroom management techniques (Levine, 2006). Furthermore, classroom management and discipline continue to be areas of frustration for some teachers even after they have taught for several years (Meister & Melnick, 2003). One study stated the reason in this way: "positively focused strategies are not often used [because] teachers do not have enough information and understanding about how they should be used" (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008, p. 696). Other studies showed that while teachers prefer to use positive discipline strategies, such as praise, and positive reinforcement, they often tend to engage in discipline interactions with students using reprimands and punitive consequences (Rosén, Taylor, & O'Leary, 1990).

Some teachers might also believe punitive consequences teach responsibility. The adage of "spare the rod and spoil the child" could come into play. This also leads to the idea teachers might not view a program based on caring and moral development as a discipline program. They might feel students need to "hurt a little" in order to learn a lesson. After all, corporal punishment is still legal in 20 states (Stephey, 2009). Another possibility is administrators might see classroom discipline as a teacher's responsibility and resist putting a school-wide discipline program into place. Teachers retain individual control of what happens with discipline within each classroom, and the larger school culture remains largely unaffected. This practice rejects the notion that schools strive to create a culture of teacher collaboration to support professional communities, and instead encourages teachers to continue to isolate themselves from each other and from the school as a whole (Senge et al., 2000). Finally, the school's culture might not allow for an initiative such as a positive discipline program to be implemented successfully. If the

culture of the school is one which makes learning as an organization difficult or even impossible, teachers may not embrace the program even if they personally agree with the rationale behind it.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study was: How does school culture affect the implementation of a positive school-wide discipline program? The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers in one elementary school implemented a positive discipline program, to elicit teacher, administrator, and student perceptions of the program, and to see what affect the culture of the school had on program implementation. This purpose has been translated into the following research questions:

1. How are staff members in one urban elementary school implementing a positive discipline program?

2. What are elementary teacher, administrator, and student perceptions of a positive discipline program?

3. How does school culture affect the implementation of a school-wide positive discipline program in an elementary school?

Theoretical Framework

I used Schein's theory of organizational culture (2004) and Noddings' theory of educational caring (2003) to examine the influence of school culture on one elementary school's effort to implement a positive discipline program. These theories are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Organizational Culture

An organization's culture can be evaluated at several different levels. These levels include the most obvious parts of a culture that can be seen, felt, and heard to the more

unconscious and deeply embedded assumptions which Schein (2004) defined as the "essence of culture" (p. 25). The three levels of culture as outlined by Schein include artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Artifacts include all input which is seen, heard, or felt when a person encounters an organization and is unfamiliar with its culture. These artifacts involve such concrete items as the physical plant where the organization is housed; the traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that can be observed; the organization's style as seen through how members dress, how they talk to each other, and how formal or informal the atmosphere. Artifacts also include the visible behavior of its members as well as formal explanations as to how the organization functions, which might be seen in organizational charts or documents (Schein, 2004). Although artifacts are generally easy to identify through observation and interaction with group members, it is difficult to ascertain the deeper meaning of these artifacts to the culture of the organization. It is even more difficult to identify whether or not these artifacts reflect the more important underlying assumptions of the group. Schein asserted it is especially dangerous to draw deeper conclusions from artifacts alone because the interpreter's own feelings and reactions will most likely be projected into the inference being made. In public schools, artifacts might include a parent/student handbook or a staff handbook which outlines the expectations of a school-wide discipline program. There may be posters or banners hung in the hallways and classrooms which also describe behavioral expectations. Oftentimes a vision/mission statement and school improvement plan are written to inform the public of a school's intended purpose and to highlight those things the school staff deem most important to achieve. Artifacts could also include how staff members dress each day, how they interact with one another, and how they treat students and parents. All of these artifacts contribute clues to understanding the type of culture a school wishes the public to see.

In Schein's (2004) framework, espoused beliefs and values comprise the second level when trying to analyze the culture of an organization and can be cultivated through conversations with staff members. These beliefs and values indicate what is outwardly important to the members of the organization at the surface level. These are often stated or written in a public way to influence how outsiders view the organization. All organizations follow someone's beliefs and values when they are first being established as a group. These beliefs and values outline what one person assumes to be the right or wrong way for an organization to proceed. Oftentimes, this person is in a formal leadership role, such as that of principal, or an informal leadership role, such as a veteran teacher. In many schools, a team of teachers is used to assist the principal in making school-wide decisions; however, the most influential people in the school are not always members of this leadership team. It is not until the entire group, or school staff, has a sense of shared knowledge that beliefs and values can begin to gain deeper meaning and be transformed into assumptions (Schein, 2004).

The transformation to assumptions does not occur for all beliefs and values. Schein (2004) explains, "only those beliefs and values that can be empirically tested and that continue to work reliably in solving the group's problems will become transformed into assumptions" (pp. 28-29). Beliefs and values are sometimes unable to be tested but can be validated through a process called social validation. Social validation occurs when certain values are confirmed because a group shares a positive social experience. During the implementation of a new school initiative, such as a school-wide positive discipline program, social validation would occur if all staff members experienced success when utilizing the strategies set forth by the new program. Although the principal or leadership team may have chosen the discipline initiative to be implemented, the staff would begin to accept this program based on their success during its use.

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These experiences allow espoused values and beliefs to be transformed into undiscussed assumptions and are supported by a stated set of beliefs, norms, and rules of behavior. The beliefs and norms are shared at a conscious level within the organization and are explicitly articulated to guide group members on how to deal with certain situations and when teaching new members the group's behavioral expectations. In schools, these beliefs and norms are often shared with new staff members through mentors assigned to the new staff to explain how things work in that particular school (Schein, 2004).

Beliefs and values which are consciously articulated will predict a great deal of the behaviors that can be seen at the artifacts level (Schein, 2004). However, if beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, they become only espoused theories. These theories can fairly well predict what people will *say* in a situation, but will not necessarily be in line with what people will *do* in situations where the beliefs and values of the organization should be evident. For example, if a teacher has not personally experienced success with the school's chosen discipline program, she might tell parents and other staff members that she is using the program, yet when in her own classroom behind closed doors, she uses a different approach to behavior which she feels to be more successful for her students. Espoused beliefs and values often fall short in explaining large areas of behavior which results in the feeling that part of the organization's culture is understood, but there is still much to learn to understand at the deepest levels.

In order for this deeper level of understanding to occur, the third level of organizational culture is needed. This third level of culture is called the level of basic underlying assumptions. Once a solution to a problem continues to work time and time again it begins to be taken for granted. The ideas and behaviors involved in this constantly successful solution are what

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become the basic underlying assumptions of the organization (Schein, 2004). Basic underlying

assumptions are held at the unconscious level, yet they guide individual and group behavior.

Inconsistencies and contradictions which might exist between the group members' espoused

values and their actions typically go unnoticed since they are not consciously aware of the

disconnect that exists. The behaviors are so embedded in the culture of an organization that

behaviors which lie outside of these assumptions are considered inconceivable by its members.

An example of one underlying assumption in a school might be how staff members assume that

parents in low-income schools will not be supportive of the school during discipline situations.

The staff believes the parents to be incapable of quality parenting techniques so they may choose

not to include parents in the discipline discussion unless absolutely necessary, which then

becomes a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers do not include parents in discipline

conversations because they believe the parents cannot, or will not help, yet the parents do not

help because the staff does not include them in the conversation. Although staff members may

not come out and say these beliefs out loud, their actions over time would indicate this to be true.

Basic assumptions are beyond argument or debate which makes them very difficult to change.

Attempts to challenge or change underlying assumptions often leads to high anxiety for group

members. In order to tolerate such anxiety levels, group members work hard to perceive the

situations around them as being in alignment with the organizations assumptions even if "that

means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to [themselves] what may be

going on around" them (Schein, 2004, p. 32). These defense mechanisms are key to the

difficulty in making changes to the culture in an organization and ultimately give the culture

power over its members who perpetuate it.

In order to make changes in an organization's culture, two key things must be present (Schein, 2004). First, the leadership of an organization must plan to manage the large amounts of anxiety which develop during any relearning at this level. Simply putting a change in place and ignoring the emotional support needed by the group members will make any successful change virtually impossible. Second, leaders must assess whether or not the potential for the new learning is even a possibility. All group members are capable of learning; however, the prior learning experiences each member brings into the organization will determine how difficult it will be for the new learning to take hold. If the leader does not effectively identify the pattern of basic assumptions working within the organization, it will be difficult to interpret the artifacts correctly or fully understand how much credibility to give to espoused values and beliefs. With these three layers together, one hopes to understand any changes to the school culture attributed to the adoption and implementation of a positive discipline program, particularly the presence of caring relationships.

Theory of Educational Caring

Teachers who have a positive and productive relationship with students are believed to exhibit the desire to care. Indeed, caring is often seen as a cornerstone to effective teaching (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Marzano et al., 2003) as well as effective schools. However, many educators define caring as a virtue one possesses and do not realize there is much more involved than merely a warm smile, a gentle hug, or being nice to a student (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Gomez, Allen, & Clinton, 2004; Noddings, 2001). Too often, teachers stop short of what an honest, caring relationship is and wonder why students do not respond in kind. It is not that teachers lack the ability to care; in fact, many enter the teaching profession because they care deeply about children. More often, the separation between a teacher's desire to care for students

and the students' response to caring is due to the misunderstood nature of caring itself (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Noddings, 2001, 2005). The area of student discipline is an opportune place for teachers to practice and master the art of truly caring for their students. Teachers can use caring to encourage students to be at their very best behaviorally while using misbehaviors as opportunities to model appropriate ways to respond to frustrating or hurtful situations. Positive discipline programs allow the teacher to exhibit a deeper level of caring than other traditional discipline programs. The strategies in many positive programs provide teachers the chance to engage in the act of caring.

The ideas contained within Noddings theory of caring in education were utilized in this study to understand how teachers at an urban elementary school were implementing a positive discipline program with students and to identify ways to improve those relationships in the future. Contemporary theories about caring in education is mainly attributed to Noddings (2003, 2005) who describes caring as being relational rather than as a personal attribute or virtue. "A *caring relation* is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings – [the one-caring] and a recipient of care, or cared-for" (Noddings, 2005, p. 15). One researcher described caring as "not something you are, but rather something you engage in, something you do" (Goldstein, 2002, p. 11). This further explains that caring in this sense is not an emotion, but a deliberate action. Researchers have found teachers who truly care about students' social and emotional well-being connect with children on a new level and can reach even the toughest kids. These teachers establish a caring relationship by learning to reach out to students and adjust to the student's needs rather than expecting the student to adjust to the teacher (Marzano et al., 2003). This idea moves caring beyond lock step rules as to how a teacher should respond to a student in any given situation and into something which allows the teacher to use variability in

her actions in order to individualize the caring act (Noddings, 2003). Although a school-wide

positive discipline program provides a structure for staff members to follow when faced with

behavioral challenges by students, it also allows for them to individualize the response based on

the behavior and the needs of the student involved.

While fulfilling the role of the one-caring, the teacher achieves what Noddings refers to

as "engrossment" (Noddings, 2005). This means the one-caring focuses completely on the needs

of the cared-for in order to fully understand what the other is trying to convey. In order for true

engrossment to be achieved, the one-caring must go beyond basic empathy in understanding the

cared-for's needs and reach a higher level of receptivity. The one-caring should, at the deepest

level possible, take on the feelings and needs of the cared-for in order to feel what he feels

(Goldstein, 2002). Noddings (2003) wrote,

> [When] I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also,
>
> that I must act accordingly, that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but
>
> on behalf of the other. (p. 12)

Once the one-caring has fully received the needs of the cared-for, the one-caring feels compelled

to respond to those needs as if they were her own. A teacher who responds positively when a

student is misbehaving enacts this type of caring.

Noddings (2005) believes in most caring relationships both participants fulfill the roles of

the one-caring and cared-for equitably; however, she recognizes in a teacher/student relationship

this role fulfillment is not equal since the teacher will find herself in the role of the one-caring

much more frequently than being in the role of the cared-for. She also recognizes these

relationships are not built quickly. They require time and continuity so the student and teacher

can learn about each other and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses present in both parties.

Building a caring environment is an on-going process which requires everyone involved to agree

on norms for behaviors and expected social skills (Gibbs, 1999). Four components Noddings

(2005, pp. 22-26) considers critical when establishing a caring classroom or school are (a)

modeling caring relationships with others, (b) establishing dialogue characterized by a search for

common understanding, (c) providing practice and opportunities for students to care for others,

and (d) providing confirmation to students their behavior is perceived and interpreted in a

positive light. These four components can be found within the structure of many positive

discipline programs.

Modeling caring relationships with others is vital to students achieving a level of

understanding on what caring relationships are all about. By modeling a caring relationship,

teachers are showing students what caring relationships entail rather than just telling them

(Noddings, 2005). A second reason why modeling is critical is "the capacity to care may be

dependent on adequate experience in being cared-for" (Noddings, 2005, p. 22). Noddings posits

even when a child is too young to knowingly participate in a caring relationship; he is able to

experience being cared-for and will learn to be responsive in that role. Modeling achieves an

even higher level when the one-caring explains to the cared-for what she is doing and why as she

models for him/her. This involves dialogue, the second critical component of a caring

relationship.

Dialogue is more than merely talking or conversation; it is open-ended in a way that the

outcome of the conversation is not predetermined by either participant. It "is a common search

for understanding, empathy, or appreciation" (Noddings, 2005, p. 23). Dialogue allows the one-

caring to explain what she is trying to show through modeling. It gives learners an opportunity

to ask questions and allows both parties to investigate misunderstandings. Most importantly,

dialogue connects people together and allows them to foster and maintain a caring relationship. People are able to respond more effectively if they understand the background and needs of the ones they are caring for.

Providing opportunities for children to practice caring is something educators plan for and is the third critical component. Children are not born with the skill to care for others; therefore, these skills are taught deliberately through modeling and dialogue, and then educators allow students the chance to use the skills in real situations (Noddings, 1988, 2003, 2005). This goes beyond requiring students to complete a community service project prior to graduation. Although this is a step in the right direction, it reduces caring to a simple act of kindness rather than an overall attitude about how we should treat others. Allowing students to practice the art of caring should occur frequently throughout the school experience and be preceded by modeling and monitored through dialogue (Noddings, 2005).

Confirmation, the final critical component, is described as the act of seeing the best in others and working towards its development (Noddings, 2005). In order for confirmation to be most effective, it must be individualized and cannot be prescriptive. The one-caring must know the cared-for well enough to understand what he or she wants to become, therefore, a deeper relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for is necessary. The individual nature of confirmation is truly realized when the one-caring identifies "something admirable, or at least acceptable, struggling to emerge in each person [she encounters]" (Noddings, 2005, p. 25). This view of seeing the best in others is especially important when responding to an act that is seen as reprehensible. The one-caring considers what may have motivated such an act and uses those ideas when engaging in dialogue with the cared-for. Dialogue may open with statements such as, "I know you were trying to help your friend..." or "I know what you're trying to accomplish."

This allows the one-caring to make it clear that while she is showing disapproval for the act, she still sees positive potential in the cared-for. Noddings (2005) stated it simply, "Confirmation lifts us toward our vision of a better self" (p. 25). A relation based on trust is crucial to confirmation since the cared-for must believe the one-caring is truthful in what she says about the potential she sees in others.

Students described caring teachers as "those who provided constructive rather than harsh and critical feedback" (Ang, 2005, p. 59), went out of their way to help students, did not have "class pets," maintained control of the classroom without being rude or disrespectful, and took the time to explain assignments clearly and completely without talking down to them (Strahan & Layell, 2006). Students who are the recipients of a caring teacher feel a positive connection to school. This connection stems from the feeling teachers care about them and want to see them succeed (Strahan et al., 2005). When caring of this kind is evident to students, the students will respond in many positive ways such as improved behavior, increased self-esteem, and increased academic achievement. These positive results and the strengthened relationships between teachers and students translate into a caring culture throughout the school, not just in the classroom. This caring culture can be found in concrete examples such as school artifacts, can be heard when staff members talk about the school's values and beliefs about children and discipline, and can be felt when seeing staff members interact with students in positive and caring ways because they want more than anything for that student to be successful.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of current literature. This review examines literature regarding research about school reform and program implementation and the various benefits of positive

teacher/student relationships including improved student behavior, the maintenance of student dignity and respect, and increased academic achievement. A short review of brain research and its relationship with student success in the school environment is also included. Chapter 3 provides information regarding the methodology followed throughout this study. This includes a discussion about research design, a short description of the research site, and an explanation of sampling and how participants were chosen. Data collection strategies are also explained, followed by a description of how data analysis and interpretation was conducted. The chapter concludes with an explanation of researcher positionality and a commitment to research quality.

Chapter 4 begins with an in-depth description of the research site and explanations of the positive discipline programs used at the site. The chapter continues with findings found while conducting the various data collection strategies. Information from focus groups, interviews, observations, and document reviews was analyzed and is outlined through three major themes: training issues, perceptions of the program by various stakeholders, and implementation issues which ultimately impeded the success of the discipline initiative. Schein's theory on organizational culture (Schein, 2004) and Nodding's theory of educational caring (Noddings, 2003) were used to frame the findings. These theories provided the structure needed for the recommendations outlined in the next chapter. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions drawn from the findings after considering the chosen theoretical framework ideas. Recommendations are presented for the school's consideration as well as implications for the implementation of future educational reform initiatives.

As schools around the country scramble to improve academic achievement, reduce behavior problems, and achieve overall student success, the school reform movement has become an important topic. Experts and researchers continue to discuss ways to best implement new programs to impact these growing concerns. A review of school reform literature indicates several common necessities for successful implementation of a school-wide program. Two of the most common themes were effective leadership practices and the presence of a learning-centered, collaborative school culture. In addition, several themes emerged indicating positive outcomes result from a caring school culture which supports the implementation of a positive discipline program and encourages teacher/student relationships. These themes were improved student behavior, increased self-esteem and respect, and increased academic achievement. The literature also pointed to the use of brain research when discussing positive discipline programs, thus a brief review of the latest brain research has been included.

School Reform: How to Implement an Initiative Successfully

School reform is nothing new. In 1915, John Dewey attempted to reach a broader audience by publishing his book, *Schools of Tomorrow*, with his daughter Evelyn. Together, they tried to explain issues in education at that time, describe reform efforts, and provide theories and suggestions as to what education might look like in the future (Cremin, 1959). The study of school reform, however, is relatively new. It was not until the 1960s that studies began to emerge which attempted to explain why some initiatives were successful and some were not (Fullan, 1995). Today, educational researchers continue to make attempts at explaining how successful school reforms can be implemented. The presence of a healthy and learning-centered

school culture and effective school leadership are two of the key components identified as being critical to the successful implementation and enduring use of a program (Datnow, 2000; Fullan, 1995; J. Gordon & Patterson, 2008; Strahan, 2003; Useem, Christman, Gold, & Simon, 1997).

Effective leadership supports successful implementation. The principal's role in the implementation of a school-wide initiative is crucial to its success (Datnow, 2000). Over the past several years, numerous studies have associated the effectiveness of the building leader with the long-term success of school reform initiatives, and have shown that effective leaders exhibit specific behaviors which contribute to this success (Desimone, 2002; Fullan, 1995; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Senge et al., 2000). An effective leader has been identified as one who helps articulate the vision of the school with staff members and practices shared decision making processes. These processes are most successfully implemented through professional learning-centered communities and allow the staff members and principal to choose appropriate initiatives to match school needs. An effective leader also allocates resources to support initiatives and supports teachers through the change process with timely and appropriate professional development opportunities. This supportive environment created by effective leaders encourages a relationship with staff members that is based on trust and integrity (Fullan, 2001). Of these leadership traits, two directly correlate to how an effective leader creates a school culture focused on teacher and student improvement.

The first leadership trait that affects school culture is the development of a collegial and trusting relationship with staff members. In school reform literature, building leaders are described as people who emotionally support their staff members and provide the positive energy needed to tackle the challenging and complex change process (Fullan, 1995). The importance of relationships was supported in one study where researchers looked at findings from studies of

nine separate professional development initiatives to try to understand why some initiatives achieved only partial implementation success while others enjoyed deeper implementation at the building level. This study involved synthesizing information from "external evaluations and internal documentation of all externally funded school-change initiatives undertaken during the 1990s" (Useem et al., 1997, p. 59) by a non-profit organization and the School District of Philadelphia. Almost all of the schools involved in the initial studies were located in high poverty neighborhoods. The goal of all of the initiatives was to change the environment within classrooms and schools. The initial nine studies focused on slightly varying aspects of reform. Five studies examined the implementation of a "schools within schools" model. Two studies focused on less intensive reform projects in middle schools. The final two studies looked at the impact of professional development delivered at the district level and funded by the National Science Foundation for improving math and science instruction (Useem et al., 1997, p. 62). These researchers found that principals who focused on staff relationships played a critical role in the success and sustaining quality of an initiative. These relationships were evident through the use of shared leadership practices and the presence of trust and respect among staff members. They shared one finding by stating,

> We saw how some principals empowered school staff by delegating authority … by creating a climate of trust and respect that allowed collegial professional community to grow, by supporting teachers to take risks, and by providing the inspiration and push needed to undertake the difficult change process (Useem et al., 1997, p. 66).

This study identified these relationships as being a cornerstone to the successful implementation of a reform. They went on to say when principals foster and nurture these collegial relationships, they are in fact building the trust required to undergird "cooperation and collective

accomplishment" (p. 66). These principals welcomed the idea of shared leadership and worked to utilize the intelligence and creative capacity of the collective group.

One of the most important tasks for successful school leaders to tackle is building leadership capacity within the school. Principals cannot do the complex and difficult work of facilitating change alone (Fullan, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 2009). Researchers have called the plan for distributing leadership tasks by many names including shared leadership, site-based management, and servant leadership (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Kruse and Louis (2009) used the term *intensified leadership,* which they defined as increasing "the number of people engaged in leadership roles and the scope of the school's work as it relates to student outcomes" (p. 10). This form of leadership takes roles historically reserved for the building leader or for a small group of teacher leaders and distributes them to many organizational members. Intensified leadership is more than simply giving the leadership work to more people. It is encouraging all stakeholders to take a collective responsibility for finding solutions to problems and keeping the vision of the school central to all reform ideas. Intensified leadership is most successfully utilized when a professional learning culture exists within a school.

A healthy school culture supports implementation efforts. The culture of a school can affect everything within it from how parent involvement is valued, to the method of instruction used, to what staff members talk about at the copier, to the way faculty respond to professional development initiatives (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Cultures are complex systems. People create a culture within an organization only to have the culture unconsciously shape them into the teachers they become. When implementing reform initiatives, the most effective school cultures exhibit similar characteristics. One of the most critical characteristics of a healthy culture is that staff members are collegial and collaborative as opposed to being isolationist in their thinking.

They are constantly striving to be better by seeking out new ways to improve their practice (Desimone, 2002; Fullan, 1995; Strahan, 2003).

A collaborative and collegial school culture allows staff members to discuss reform efforts without fear of judgment or criticism. Team and faculty discussions are held for the purpose of improving individual practice and answering implementation questions when an initiative is still new. Many schools refer to a culture such as this as a *professional learning community* (Eaker et al., 2002). A professional learning community (PLC) is defined as "a concept based on the premise that if students are to learn at higher levels, processes must be in place to ensure, job-embedded learning of the adults who serve them" (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 21). A PLC encourages teachers to be a part of something bigger than themselves in order to tackle problems, raise expectations, improve pedagogy, and maintain a constant focus on personal growth and learning for both teachers and students. A culture built on PLC practices pull teachers away from isolationist practices towards a group mentality of achieving common goals. The current PLC model, although not a new idea, has experienced wide-spread implementation around the country since its formal introduction 15 years ago (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, (1998). Many school leaders have attempted to create PLCs and ultimately change the culture of their school to become truly collaborative, yet few have succeeded in this endeavor (Fullan, 1995). This is due to both the complexity of the change process and the complexity of school cultures.

In his pivotal work on school change, Michael Fullan (1995) observed that in order to successfully achieve complex change many people are needed to work together towards common solutions, then they must commit themselves to take specific actions together as a group. He cautioned, however, that collaborative groups can be pushed to the extreme and then become

counterproductive. Collaboration, in and of itself, is not automatically the answer to all of the educational system's problems. It is possible, after all, to collaborate about the wrong thing or about negative topics. There is also a danger of losing the individual within the group when people become participants in a "group think" and fail to question or be critical of the latest solutions or innovations (Fullan, 1995, p. 34). The freedom to think and act independently is a critical component of educational reform, while still maintaining a balance with the need for approaching problems as opportunities to learn and grow collaboratively. Conflict can be healthy when handled properly and the culture of an organization allows the conflict to assist in keeping the group on the path to their chosen goals by constantly questioning, "How does this help students be more successful?" In a successful collaborative school culture, staff members are encouraged to share, question, criticize, hypothesize, and support the mission and vision set forth collectively by the school. There is a climate of trust between the administrator and staff members, and among staff members themselves that allows for this open dialogue to occur. Faculty in positive culture schools believe that continuous improvement, including the implementation of new initiatives, is not about achieving success, but rather about a constant desire to be better (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

The presence of a collaborative culture or PLC supports the adoption of reform initiatives such as a school-wide positive discipline program (Fullan, 2006). Teachers used the conversations with colleagues to discuss ways to translate new ideas into practice (Strahan, 2003). These deliberations helped teachers make sense of the reform and how they impacted their classrooms. They also allowed teachers to achieve a common understanding regarding students' academic and behavioral expectations.

Improving Student Behavior

Every teacher searches for the perfect discipline program; the program where all students do as they are asked, respect authority, are kind to others, and where teachers can actually teach content instead of focusing on disruptive student behaviors. Although the perfect discipline program does not exist, many researchers have shown the connection between a positive teacher/student relationship and a decrease in disruptive behaviors (Ang, 2005; Gibbs, 1999; Marshall, 1998; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Payton et al., 2008; Strahan et al., 2005; Wentzel, 2003). One group of researchers explained by stating, "The most successful teachers [orchestrate] classroom management by creating positive relationships with their students" (Strahan et al., 2005, p. 26), which creates a climate for positive discipline should a student become disruptive.

Several researchers described situations where disruptive students were attended to with respect instead of aggression. Teachers often spoke to these students one-on-one or in small groups, allowing the students to consider their actions and help them understand the ramifications and consequences of such actions through reflective discussion techniques (Gibbs, 1999; Strahan & Layell, 2006). This positive approach reflects three of the four components identified earlier that are considered critical to establishing a caring classroom according to Noddings (2005). During a reflective conversation, teachers are able to model a caring relationship. They do so in how they treat the student, establish the type of dialogue needed for a common understanding of the problem, and help the student see, although the behavior was inappropriate, she or he is still valued and viewed in a positive light.

When disruptions occur, successful teachers consider the causes of the behavior and work with students individually so they can seize the moment to model self-discipline (Gibbs, 1999;

Strahan et al., 2005). One group of researchers (Strahan et al., 2005) summarized the

phenomenon in this way: "By asking students to reflect on their decisions, plan and carry out

corrections, make commitments, and discuss what they learned, teachers simultaneously hold

students accountable and reinforce positive relationships" (p. 26). Students who are given the

opportunity to practice socially competent behaviors in a way that allows them to tackle

situations with greater complexity while still being supported by an adult acquire skills to use in

the future when an adult is not present (S. Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1996).

For many teachers, being positive is a completely new way to look at discipline. For too

long, punishment has been mistaken for discipline (Bailey, 2009) and teachers have operated

under the guise of thinking the student must suffer in order to learn a lesson (Marshall, 1998).

Ironically, the exact opposite is true. As students realize they will not be harmed when they

make a mistake, they become more responsible and are more likely to correct the misbehavior

themselves. For students to learn self-correction and self-control is the desired result of any

discipline program. A program based on a positive teacher/student relationship can achieve

positive behavioral results, without suppressing students' emotions, which are necessary for

engagement in the classroom (Marshall, 1998).

Maintaining Children's Dignity and Respect

The need to maintain a student's dignity is well-researched (Scott & et al., 1996). In

1991, the National Center on Self Esteem administered a survey and found that as students get

older, their level of self-esteem declines. Self-esteem is defined as "appreciating one's own

worth and importance, and having the character to be accountable for oneself, and to act

responsibly toward others" (Scott & et al., 1996, p. 286). Their survey found 89% of

kindergarteners reported having high self-esteem while only 20% of fifth graders reported a high

self-esteem level. The decline continued through high school and college with 5% of high school graduates admitting a high self-esteem level and a mere 2% of college graduates felt their self-esteem level could be described as high (Scott & et al., 1996, p. 286). Although familial influences substantially form a student's self-concept of dignity, by the time she or he enters school, the impact of the school environment cannot be taken for granted.

As students discover the support a positive relationship with a teacher can provide, their self-esteem and respect for adults increases (Marshall, 1998; Murray & Pianta, 2007; Strahan & Layell, 2006). Teachers who exhibit a calm and respectful presence when dealing with students are, in turn, respected by students. When the student feels he is being treated with disrespect and experiences a loss of dignity, a conflict with the teacher often occurs (Marshall, 1998). All too often teachers are heard saying thoughtless statements to children such as, "You are acting like a kindergartener!" to a fourth grade boy, or "You are so disorganized." There seems to be a disconnection between a teacher's ability to increase a student's self-esteem level and the teacher's knowledge of *how* to elicit this change. The concept of self-esteem is seldom discussed in schools at a conceptual level which leads to varied and sometimes inaccurate understandings of how a teacher can affect student self-esteem directly (Scott & et al., 1996). Teachers are quick to talk about curriculum, instruction, discipline, and learning styles, but rarely do we hear teachers talk about how to maintain and value the dignity of a child (Senge et al., 2000). Creating specific situations for students in a consistent and ongoing way so the teacher can provide both positive and constructive feedback allows the student to better construct a sense of self without student self-esteem taking a beating (Scott & et al., 1996).

As teachers build bridges with students to show they care about them, students are able to develop a positive identity within the classroom. This positive identity is fostered through

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deliberate activities to encourage relationship building between the teacher and student, and the student with his entire class (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). Student self-esteem levels are increased as feelings of self-value and self-worth become the norm. In addition, researchers found teachers who allow students a sense of autonomy, while supporting and encouraging them to take risks and succeed, ultimately have students who report higher self-esteem levels than students who feel controlled and manipulated by the teacher (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). Focusing on student dignity as a primary value gives educators a place to begin building a shared vision and finding programs and initiatives that support that vision (Senge et al., 2000).

Students in positive classrooms are also encouraged to build positive relationships with each other. This sense of community creates a classroom climate that promotes mutual respect and responsibility (Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Strahan & Layell, 2006) and is also seen at the school level. The way in which a teacher responds to a student and models a positive relationship with that student has a large influence on the relationship the student has with his classmates. Several studies (Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Strahan & Layell, 2006) have found students who establish positive and supportive relationships with teachers are more accepted by their peers. Further, students who were originally peer-rejected were more likely to be accepted in subsequent years when they were involved in a positive relationship with a teacher. A study in 2003 (Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall) found students who had positive relationships with teachers experienced increases in self-esteem; however, the opposite was true with students who had negative relationships with teachers. This longitudinal study followed over 2,500 middle schoolers in Massachusetts over a three year period from sixth grade to eighth grade. The students were primarily Caucasian with only 17% minority and nearly 24% received free lunch services. Participants took surveys in their homeroom classes once each year with the teacher reading the

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items aloud. Reddy, Rhodes, and Mulhall's study revealed students who experienced the

greatest decline in teacher-student relationship quality had the highest increase in depression.

These students also reported higher levels of anxiety and experienced more behavior problems.

Assisting students in achieving higher levels of self-esteem builds self-confidence, and

confidence in oneself ultimately leads to increased academic achievement (Strahan & Layell,

2006).

Increased Academic Achievement

Another outcome from positive teacher-student relationships in schools is that of

increased academic achievement. Several studies have tied success in academics to a positive

relationship between the student and teacher (Ang, 2005; Strahan et al., 2005; Strahan & Layell,

2006). For example, Ang's (2005) study gathered information to support the creation of a

teacher/ student relationship scale which would collect teacher perceptions of their relationships

with students. The study was conducted with 227 adolescent students in grades 7-9 and 11

classroom teachers from a secondary school in Singapore. Ang found that students who

characterized their relationship with their teacher as positive and satisfactory were more willing

to approach their teachers for help which ultimately led to higher grades.

Another study (Strahan et al., 2005) followed a three-year partnership between two

university researchers, a middle school assistant principal, and a middle school teacher, and

examined student and faculty perceptions of a program recently implemented at their school.

This program was initiated to better meet the needs of students struggling both academically and

behaviorally in school and deemed by staff members to be "difficult to teach" (p. 29). These

researchers learned that students in this program were more successful because they felt

connected to the school. Students were challenged with higher academic expectations, but were

supported through positive interactions with staff and an environment that provided emotional and psychological safety. The teacher/student relationships formed allowed students to realize their teachers cared about them and wanted them to succeed.

A mixed methods study (Strahan & Layell, 2006), conducted at a middle school with 645 students in grades six through eight, statistically supported the finding that positive teacher/student relationships contribute to higher academic gains. During this study, researchers interviewed teachers bimonthly and conducted lesson observations over the course of a year. They also collected student work samples and analyzed letters written by students at the end of the year outlining the students' understanding of their own success. The researchers found that students attributed their academic success, in part, to the caring relationships they had with teachers. The quantitative data showed that students who participated in the study scored higher on both state reading and state math tests than their peers who did not participate. The positive nature of these relationships supported students emotionally so they could focus more on academics and less on the social/emotional aspects of learning.

Conversely, a longitudinal study found students who characterized poor teacher/student relationships actually had poorer grades in school (DiLalla, Marcus, & Wright-Phillips, 2004). In this study, 42 students were assessed at age five regarding their behavior in school, their level of anxiety in various situations, and their relationships with their teachers. The students were then assessed six to eight years later to determine their academic and social success levels in school. These researchers found that students with poor student/teacher relationships were more likely to have lower grades. They attributed this result to students feeling uncomfortable in the classroom and being more concerned with how the teacher viewed them rather than focusing on their schoolwork.

There are several explanations why students with positive teacher/student relationships perform better in school academically. The first reason is a simple one: these students felt the teacher liked them. When relationships are shared with a student and fosters the idea the teacher cares about him not only academically, but emotionally as well, the student has better attendance and is more likely to respond to the teacher's demands for academic excellence (Ang, 2005; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Marzano et al., 2003; Strahan & Layell, 2006; Wentzel, 2003). A second reason for increased student achievement is shown through brain science.

The Human Brain and Student Discipline

The brain is full of threat sensors that filter stimuli from the environment to make sure there is no immediate danger physically or emotionally. If a threat is perceived, the brain kicks into high gear to "protect" the body and brain from attack (Jensen, 1998). Students can only attend to instruction when their brain believes it is safe to do so. To a student's brain, all outside influences are potential threats. Some students experience threats from acts of teasing, bullying, or from being singled out by the teacher when they do not know an answer. In this environment, students are unable to focus on learning and instruction because their brain is kept busy filtering the perceived threats from the environment. When a student is in a positive relationship with the teacher and peers, the brain is able to relax these threat sensors and use its focus and energy on cognitive tasks. The ability to focus more on cognitive tasks and less on social responses equates to higher student achievement (Jensen, 1998; Sousa, 2006).

Brain science researchers have found several connections between academic learning, behavior management, and the utilization of the affective or social-emotional parts of the brain (Jensen, 1998; Sousa, 2006). In recent decades, the scientific knowledge of how the brain learns and what happens in the brain when learning is occurring has exploded. Unfortunately,

neuroscience journals are too technical for the average teacher to glean important instructional

information that would allow them to apply this scientific knowledge to their classroom. Jensen

(1998) is an educator who has connected the study of neuroscience and learning in the classroom

and has written books to assist educational practitioners in the application of brain science in the

classroom environment. Jensen analyzed hundreds of brain research studies to find trends and

patterns that can assist teachers in capitalizing on what is known about the human brain and

learning. Although Jensen is not a brain researcher himself, his breadth of knowledge about

neuroscience and learning has allowed him to be recognized by the educational community as

one of the leading experts in this field. One common finding in neuroscience research is

emotions affect how a student learns and retains information (Jensen, 1998).

No one area of the brain serves as the *emotional control center* (Jensen, 1998). As a

result, emotions and feelings have an effect on many parts of the brain. The body produces

many emotion-based chemicals the brain regulates that can affect learning, behavior, and

emotional response. These chemicals influence outward behaviors and dominate one's system

when present. Once the chemicals are released, it is difficult to simply shut them off due to their

widespread dispersal throughout the body (Jensen, 1998). Messenger molecules, or peptides,

take messages to and from the brain through the bloodstream. These molecules let the brain

know there is physical or emotional danger present. The brain then responds to the threat by

sending messages to other parts of the brain or body and tells those parts how to react. For

example, if a student is going into a new school or classroom for the first time and does not know

anyone, the brain receptors are on high alert and the student may have "butterflies" in his

stomach or feel anxious. As the student gets to know others and feels more comfortable in his

new surroundings, the messenger peptides stop sending threat messages to the brain and the

brain is able to focus on other tasks such as relationship building and academic learning (Jensen, 1998).

Understanding how the brain works and respecting the power that lies within the brain can help teachers use the brain's functions to their advantage. Jensen (1998) stated it in this way, "Good learning does not avoid emotions; it embraces them, recognizing emotional states as fast-changing, specific neural networks that incorporate multiple areas of the brain" (p. 72). If students within a school or classroom are constantly worried or anxious about negative responses from school staff members or other students, the ability to learn or manage behavior becomes limited since the brain is attending to the immediate threat at hand. Although other non-threatening emotions take a slower route getting to and from the brain, threats are always on the brain's "superhighway" and are dealt with by the brain as quickly as possible (Jensen, 1998). A constant state of threat equates to an excessive amount of stress on the student's mind and body. Stress can be healthy, but only if experienced occasionally and at moderate levels. Continued states of fear will produce an unhealthy level of stress which leads to increased absenteeism, tardiness, and ultimately impaired cognition (Jensen, 1998). Students attending a school with a negative or threatening culture will be in a constant state of stress which affects how that student will perform in school.

Ongoing, high levels of stress are often referred to as "distress" and include the following factors: "(1) heightened excitability or arousal, (2) the perception of the event as aversive, and (3) the loss of controllability" (Jensen, 1998, p. 74). Distress has been shown to kill brain cells, reduce the number of new brain cells created by the brain, and damage the hippocampus, which is involved with learning and memory acquisition. In addition, chronic stress has been tied to mood disorders and the impairment of the student's ability to make decisions as to what is

important and what is not. Students attending a school with a negative or threatening culture will be in a constant state of stress which will affect how that student will perform in school and how successful they will be at building relationships with others.

The research supports the need for learners to be in as stress-free environment as possible (Jensen, 1998; Sousa, 2006). The positive teacher-student relationship and the teacher encouragement of relationship building between students is a major step in the right direction. "Teachers who help their students feel good about learning through classroom success, friendship, and celebrations are doing the very thing the student brain craves" commented Jensen (1998, p. 77). Understanding and utilizing the emotional state of children's brains is key to increased self-esteem and academic achievement.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The overall research design was an ethnographic case study, which Merriam (1998) defined as "a case study focusing on … the culture of a school, a group of students, or classroom behavior" (pp. 34-35). This type of study allowed me to dig deeper into the culture of the school chosen for this study through interviews with students and staff, observations in the classroom, hallways, and office, and recording of ethnographic field notes. Qualitative methods were preferred due to their constructivist nature in understanding the culture of the school as perceived by the participants. As a researcher, I could go from being an "outsider" to becoming an "insider" depending on the desired level of involvement with the participants (Creswell, 2007). Prior to this study, I served as the building principal of a different elementary school in the same district. This allowed me to already be familiar with the principal and several teachers at the school, which is referred to using the pseudonym Shelley Elementary. These staff members knew me as a colleague and, for some, a friend which gave me insider access very quickly. However, I did not have a previously established relationship with most of the teaching staff or with any students. This put me in the outsider position during most of the study and affected the study in several ways, which is more thoroughly explained in the researcher position section. Because I was interested in learning about the perspectives of the students and staff at Shelley Elementary in regards to discipline and school culture, an interpretive approach best aligned with the purposes of this study (Creswell, 2007).

Research Site

In order to study the relationship between school culture and the implementation of a positive discipline program, I needed to find a site that had been using a positive discipline

program throughout the school for at least two years. Cypress School District (also a pseudonym) agreed to allow me access to Shelley Elementary School, which met the criteria. Shelley adopted the Effective School Discipline program and trained all staff members, including hourly employees, in the use of the program in the fall of 2008. School artifacts such as the parent handbook, staff handbook, and website indicated the continued use of this program when my study began in the spring of 2011. An in-depth description of the research site is included in Chapter 4.

Sampling and Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in order to guarantee participants had knowledge of the problem being studied. Purposeful sampling is a cornerstone of qualitative research techniques and targets certain participants for their involvement or knowledge of the topic in order to gain the most insight (Merriam, 1998). A *typical* sample is one type of purposeful sampling defined by Merriam (1998, p. 62) as "one that is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest." This type of sample allowed me to discern what was deemed to be "normal" in regard to staff and student perception of discipline and culture. A total of 29 adults participated in this study, and included the building Principal, an instructional coach, a counselor, a paraprofessional, two clerical staff, and 23 teachers due to their involvement with student discipline and establishing classroom and school culture. All adult participants took part in one of three focus groups. Further interviews were conducted with four classroom teachers, the principal, and the instructional coach. Observations were collected in three classrooms after considering the responses given by teachers during the focus groups.

Approximately 60 elementary school students were also involved as participants. Most of these students were involved only in classroom observation sessions. Twenty-eight students

returned parent consent forms and were included in one of four focus groups. Any participant who was 18 years of age or older was asked to sign a consent form before participating in focus groups or interviews. Because no Shelley Elementary students were 18 years of age, a signed parental consent form (see Appendix A for consent forms) was required prior to them taking part in the focus groups. Once a parental consent form was obtained, students were also asked to sign an assent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix A for assent form). The next section outlines more specific details of data collection strategies and analysis.

Data Collection Strategies

Several qualitative data collection strategies were utilized during this study in order to address the research questions. I used participant observations, focus groups, interviews, and document review to try to capture the culture of the school from the participants' perspectives. Data were collected for four months between January and April 2011.

In an effort to create a study that was manageable in the time frame given, a choice was made initially to narrow the study to in-depth observations in only two classrooms and limit it to 24 staff members for two focus groups and 16-20 students for two focus groups. However, as data were being collected, it became necessary to broaden the scope of the study in order to reach a level of redundancy and to obtain a more complete picture of the school's culture. By the end of the study, 27 staff members had participated in three focus groups, and 28 students had participated in four focus groups. These changes are examples of an emergent design, indicating the study needed to change as I began to collect data in the field. By allowing the study to follow an emergent design format, I was better able to ensure the data collection methods were effectively collecting the opinions and feelings of those being studied (Merriam, 1998).

Participant Observation

Participant observation occurs when the researcher enters the field and observes the participants in their element, in this case, an urban elementary school. During observations, I recorded field notes as to what I saw and heard in regards to school culture and caring while in that setting. These notes are viewed as the "brick and mortar of an ethnographic structure" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 107) and became important artifacts in the study of this school's culture. Observation allowed me to study the participants in their environment and make connections between what was said during interviews and focus groups and what I observed. These observations were essential to assist in determining the difference between the artifacts, the espoused beliefs and values, and the underlying assumptions. When performing field work such as this, it was important to choose a small part of the school being studied in order to make the research manageable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Observations took place during short sessions at the beginning so field notes could be recorded to depict what occurred in the setting. My personal notes and observations became critical to the study in addition to the literal notes taken during the sessions.

For this study, I observed in the elementary school over the course of four months. Sessions began in one-hour segments and session lengths varied throughout the semester. The number of sessions per week was dependent on what was occurring at the school from week to week. Observations were primarily in three classrooms, the hallways, the office, and the lunchroom.

I considered the possibility that my presence might alter the behavior of the participants. This phenomenon, known as "consequential presence," (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 3) could be connected to influencing what the participants say and how they act due to the

participatory nature of the researcher's role. However, this should not be seen as "contaminating" what is observed during the observation sessions but, rather, should be seen as revealing the true culture since the researcher is considered to be a member of that culture (Emerson et al., 1995). As stated earlier, I had both an insider and outsider position with the staff and students of this school. These opposing positions were considered as I collected data in the field. I spent a great deal of time with the participants during the course of the study so that my presence would be less of a factor in influencing the responses and actions of study members. I discuss my insider-outside stance and how it affected the study at greater length in the Researcher Position section.

Focus Groups

Focus groups offered me the opportunity to interview a group of teachers at one time about their perceptions of Effective School Discipline and begin to gain an understanding of the school's underlying culture. The advantage of this format was the interaction among the group members where they were encouraged to share opinions they may have been hesitant to share in a one-on-one setting (Creswell, 2007). Because this study focused on the culture of the school, it was informative to observe the focus group participants as they interacted with one another. The number of focus groups increased from the original plan in order to gain a better understanding of the culture of the school. By the conclusion of the study, three adult focus groups were conducted with 6-10 members in each group representing teachers, a paraprofessional, a counselor, and two clerical employees. On the day following the first staff focus group, two participants from Staff Focus Group 1 requested to be dropped from the study and their comments not be used. They had heard another participant from that focus group had gone to the principal and shared comments made by some of the group participants on the previous day.

Although these staff members' comments remained in the transcripts for context purposes, their comments were not used in the findings section of the final study.

Four student focus groups of 6-10 students each were conducted in order to gather information about the students' perceptions of the school and their experiences with the school-wide discipline program. The student focus groups were comprised of third, fourth, and fifth graders. Most of the students had attended Shelley Elementary prior to the adoption of Effective School Discipline while a few had only attended the school for a short time.

The first few focus groups for both adults and students revealed contradictory perceptions regarding the school and the use of the discipline program. This made it necessary to have more groups participate to gain a deeper understanding of how the school functioned and how the school discipline program was being implemented. It was important to encourage each member of the focus groups to participate in the conversation and try to monitor members who seemed to dominate in order for a variety of perceptions to be gathered for analysis. (Questions for each focus group are included in Appendix B.)

Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common data collection strategies used by qualitative researchers while conducting an ethnographic study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Interviews allowed me to go deeper with participants in regard to their perceptions of the school and the positive discipline program in a way that other data collection strategies could not (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Four teachers, the principal, and the instructional coach were interviewed for this study. By conducting individual interviews in addition to focus groups, I was able to gain greater insight into observations made during the focus groups or during observation sessions in the classrooms. It was important to make each participant feel at ease so

she was not self-conscious about sharing what was really on her mind. (Questions for interviews are included in Appendix C.)

Document Review

A review of school documents enabled me to see yet another form of data which informed the study in a different way (Merriam, 1998). A document review was conducted to provide insight about the policies and procedures Shelley Elementary school has in place regarding discipline. These documents included staff and parent handbooks, the Shelley Elementary School Improvement Plan, website information, Six Pillars documents which outlined expectations for character education traits, and discipline referral data from the Shelley Elementary School office. These artifacts allowed me to begin to identify the espoused beliefs and values held by the staff as stated in the documents. They framed the picture of what I should have expected to find once I began to collect data in the field. Effective School Discipline training documents were also reviewed to better understand the training teachers received and the expectations of the program.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of organizing the data in a way that allows them to be broken down into smaller parts, coding those parts, then identifying themes that emerge from interpreting the data to come up with findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007). All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and unitized. Unitization is the process of breaking down the comments participants make during individual and group interviews. During the transcription and unitization process, themes began to emerge to use for coding and to assist me in finding how all of the data pieces fit together. Documents reviewed for this study were analyzed and, if applicable, coded in order to be useful when comparing different data

points that served as examples of the three levels of culture or the presence of caring (Merriam, 1998).

Coding consisted of searching through the data to find patterns, common words or phrases, themes, or topics, then a list of coding categories was created to enable me to organize the bits of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data were entered into a computer database program, Filemaker Pro, to help facilitate the sorting and coding process. For this study, a constant comparative method of analysis was used. This method required each unit of data be constantly compared with other units of data to identify relationships that may exist (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method was especially useful in studying the culture of the school since much of an organization's culture requires the synthesis of many levels of data in order to gain an understanding of how underlying assumptions came to be (Schein, 2004).

For ethnographic field notes, I read line-by-line through as many notes as possible in one sitting in order to identify emergent themes (Emerson et al., 1995). This method allowed me to gain fresh insight as I reviewed the entire set of notes during a relatively short time-frame. Once the entire set of notes had been read, I began to code the data in much the same way as the interview and focus group data. Field note data were entered into the Filemaker Pro program to facilitate the coding process.

Once data were analyzed, I interpreted them using Schein's (2004) organizational culture theory and Nodding's (2003) care theory as the theoretical lenses. Principles of these theories were considered as I combed through the data to ascertain possible connections between the theories, comments made by participants, and my observations. By using these theoretical lenses, and keeping in mind the research questions being studied, I was able to share findings and

recommendations with the building principal at Shelley Elementary in regard to the culture of the school and the implementation and maintenance of the positive discipline program.

Researcher Position

Like many new teachers, in my first year of teaching, I too struggled with classroom management. I had not received much training from my college courses in this area and relied on what experiences I had as a child to guide me. An experienced teacher whose room was down the hall from mine had a very strict and negative discipline style. When she brought her class to the drinking fountains outside my room, I would hear her berate and cut down kids daily. Eventually, I began to close my door so I wouldn't hear the nasty tone and negative words she delivered to students on a regular basis. I felt guilty that I could escape her wicked tongue, yet her students could not. I knew at that point there had to be a better way. That experience began my interest in researching positive discipline programs and how they related to school culture. As a teacher, I continued to search for a discipline program that respected students and supported their social and emotional growth. When I moved into administration as the Curriculum Director of a small district in central Kansas, I discovered the Effective School Discipline program being used throughout the district from Kindergarten to 12th grade. The program had been created by the high school principal when he worked in a neighboring district at their alternative high school, where many of the students had significant behavioral issues. I was intrigued by how well students responded to the program and how the overall climate of the school seemed positive and in control. I wondered if there was a link between the style of the discipline program and the calm environment within the schools.

My previous experience with the Effective Schools Discipline program and my personal relationship with its author is likely to have influenced my interpretation of the data (Peshkin,

1988). As Curriculum Director in Hesston, Kansas, I personally worked with the creator of the

Effective School Discipline program, Larry Thompson, who was the high school principal.

Although I did not directly work with Mr. Thompson on Effective School Discipline, I consider

him a friend and have a great deal of respect for him as an educator and instructional leader. In

addition, I have been trained in the use of Effective School Discipline and implemented the

program at an elementary building where I was the principal. I believe the program is effective

and I came to the study with a bias in support of the program. Knowing this bias, I worked hard

to remain neutral as I observed, wrote, and analyzed my field notes to look at the culture for what

it actually *was* versus what I wanted or expected it to be. Noblit (1999) refers to this as "writing

against myself."

My prior relationship with some teachers and the principal at Shelley Elementary School

as mentioned earlier also played a part in how they responded during observation sessions, focus

groups, and interviews. Initially, my relationship with the principal created a sense of distrust

amongst staff members who thought the principal had brought me there to collect information for

her, not for the study. This misconception was addressed through conversations with staff

members which allowed me to build new relationships with participants who did not know me

prior to the beginning of the study. I gained their trust by pledging to keep our interviews, focus

group information, and observation data confidential then making sure I followed through.

Finally, as a white middle to upper class female, I was very different from the majority of

students I studied at Shelley Elementary School. This could have caused a sense of distrust

between the students, staff, and me and may have made it difficult for me to understand their

perspectives since they come from a background very different from my own.

Research Quality

Every researcher wants the reader to believe his or her research was performed with the utmost care to ensure reliability, trustworthiness, and credibility. This researcher was no different. Prolonged engagement is a credibility technique which can increase the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By committing to spend sufficient time observing and collecting data in the field, I was more likely to understand the culture of the school and build trust with the research participants to gain their perceptions of the discipline program. Sometimes, distortions can occur in the data when the participants are not familiar or comfortable with the researcher. I spent several months in the field in order to gain deeper understanding and insight into the culture of the school and how the Effective School Discipline program was being implemented.

In order to increase the validity of the findings, multiple data collection techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and document review were used. Data collected through multiple methods and sources provided for triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is defined as the researcher using data from multiple sources and multiple methods to corroborate the findings (Merriam, 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe the value of triangulation in this way, "Many sources of data [are] better in a study than a single source because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena you [are] studying" (pp. 115-116). By looking at multiple data sources regarding the same question, and using several methods, I was able to get a fuller understanding of the many facets of the school's culture.

An additional qualitative research technique called member checking was also utilized. This technique required me to take data and my initial interpretations of the data back to the

participants to "solicit their views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). By using this technique, the participants were able to validate their views and perspectives were accurately recorded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Opportunities were provided throughout the data collection and analysis stages for participants of the study to review field notes, transcripts, and document data.

Finally, the use of "rich and thick" descriptions was used. These descriptions consisted of enough information in thorough, descriptive narratives to allow the readers to decide how closely this ethnography matched their own situations (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted, "It is … *not* the [researcher's] task to provide an *index* of transferability; it *is* his or her responsibility to provide the *data base* that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of the potential appliers" (p. 315). By writing descriptions thick in content, those reading the study are able to recreate the context in which the study was conducted and understand how the researcher came to the findings and conclusions presented, which are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: THE UNDISCIPLINED IMPLEMENTATION OF A POSITIVE

DISCIPLINE PROGRAM

This chapter presents the findings that resulted from the analysis of data collected during

the study. Information gathered during four months of observations, focus groups with staff

members and students, interviews with teachers and administration, and a thorough document

review provided insight as to the inner workings of a school's culture and how that culture

affected the implementation of a school-wide positive discipline program. The chapter begins

with an in-depth description of the research site and an explanation of the two school-wide

positive discipline programs used at the school during this study. The rest of the chapter reports

the findings, which are organized into four sections. The first section shares the rationale behind

Shelley Elementary School's need for adopting a school-wide positive discipline program. The

next section discusses how training was handled when the Effective School Discipline program

was first introduced. It also explains how ongoing training has been supported as well as how

new staff members are trained when they join the staff. The third section shares the perceptions

of three stakeholder groups: staff members, the administrator, and students. These participant

responses provide insight on how each stakeholder group feels Effective School Discipline is

either working or not working at Shelley Elementary. Finally, in section four are findings

outlining specific implementation issues. These issues include the misunderstanding and misuse

of the ESD program, the lack of trust between staff members and administration, and the deficit

views held by many of the staff members towards their high poverty students and parents.

Throughout Chapter 4, all teaching staff members are referred to as "teachers." This group

includes classroom teachers and specials teachers such as music, art, PE, and library. Other

participants, including paraprofessionals, the nurse, the counselor, and the instructional coach are referred to as "staff members."

Research Site

In order to study the relationship between school culture and the implementation of a positive discipline program, I needed to find a site that had been using a positive discipline program throughout the school for at least three years. Cypress School District agreed to allow me access to Shelley Elementary School, which met the study's criteria.

Cypress School District

Cypress School District is an urban district serving more than 50,000 students. As one of the largest school districts in the midwest region of the United States, it is ethnically and racially diverse with a student body represented by 36% Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, 19% African-American, 8% Multi-racial, 5% Asian and 2% other races which include American Indian and Pacific Islander. More than 88 languages are spoken in Cypress District and all correspondence is translated into eight different languages daily (Cypress School District, 2010). Cypress School District qualifies for Title I funding with almost 70% of students coming from economically disadvantaged homes (Midwest State Department of Education, 2009). Although significant increases in student achievement have occurred over the last several years, this district is currently on Title I Corrective Action for not meeting AYP requirements in the areas of reading and math for 5 consecutive years.

Shelley Elementary School

Shelley Elementary is one of 56 elementary schools in the Cypress School District. The school's enrollment of 355 students is comprised of 42% Caucasian, 24% Hispanic, 20% African-American, 10% with two or more races, and 4% other races including Asian, American

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Indian, and Pacific Islander. Approximately 90% of the student population lives in an economically disadvantaged home and 12% receive special education services. The staff at Shelley is comprised of 50 adults, which include one principal, one instructional coach, 29 certified teachers, five of whom are part-time or shared with other buildings, and nine paraprofessionals or classroom aides, four of whom are part-time. In addition, there are two office staff, five child study team members (school psychologist, counselor, nurse, speech/language pathologist, and social worker), and three custodial/lunch room supervisors. Racially, the staff is very different from the student body in that over 90% of them are Caucasian, with 6% African-American, and 4% Hispanic.

Shelley has increased student achievement in mathematics each year for the past five years. Although still below the state math target, Shelley is not on Title I improvement status due to making Safe Harbor. Safe Harbor may be applied for any school that does not meet the state target in reading or math for any subgroup. In order to qualify for Safe Harbor, a school's data is checked against three criteria:

1) Did 95% of this group participate in the State assessment? 2) Does this group have a 90% attendance rate or show improvement from previous year? (applies to elementary schools and districts), and 3) Does this group have an 80% graduation rate or meet the graduation target? (Graduation rate applies to high schools and districts.) A group makes Safe Harbor if the percent of students who are **not proficient** (not at Meets Standard) on State assessments decreased by at least 10% from the previous year's results. If the group makes Safe Harbor, it is considered to make AYP. A 75% confidence interval will also be applied if the decrease is less than the 10% target. (Midwest State Department of Education, 2008, p. 5)

Shelley Elementary exhibited increased student achievement in reading from 2007-2009. In 2010, reading scores went down by 7%. That was the first year since 2006 Shelley Elementary did not meet the reading target, nor qualify for Safe Harbor; however they were not placed on Title I improvement for reading, since Title I improvement status requires two consecutive years of reading scores that fall below the yearly target set forth by the state.

Positive programs. Several programs have been implemented at Shelley Elementary to encourage the feeling of a positive school climate for both the students and staff. One program, introduced in 2008, was based on six *pillars,* which focused on teamwork, responsibility, positive attitude, respect, trustworthiness, and compassion. Each *pillar*, or trait, was described in detail on posters hanging around the school that outlined expected behaviors if a student was exemplifying that trait. If a student was having a behavior issue, one of the pillars was to be used as a way to talk with the student regarding expectations at the school. Likewise, the principal and staff members could use the pillars to guide conversations with each other and hold each other accountable for the ideals outlined in the pillar system. The pillars stated the expectations of all students and staff and were supported through various incentive programs. Each week, selected students were recognized for exhibiting the behaviors of the designated pillar for the week. One student from each classroom was recognized each quarter if he or she exhibited all six pillars. Assemblies were held to recognize students who exhibited these traits throughout the year. In addition, a paper chain was created and hung in the hall which represented times different students exhibited the expected traits. These students would be given a slip of paper signed by the teacher; the students would record their names, and then add their links to the school-wide chain.

Other incentive activities included a Spirit Stick Award for wearing school colors on Fridays, Paper Chain Links for documenting classroom pillar behaviors, and the "Looking Sharp Award" given by the principal or instructional coach to students who were caught doing the right things and making good choices. Shelley also implemented a "Tour Team" which consisted of fourth and fifth grade students who served as ambassadors and tour guides when visitors came to the building. They were trained to share the school's history and programs, and introduce guests to various staff members around the building. These activities combined to create an atmosphere of working towards a common goal and instilling student and staff pride for the school. The programs mentioned above were initiated to support the implementation of the Effective School Discipline program, which began in the fall of 2008.

Effective School Discipline. Larry Thompson, creator of the Effective School Discipline (ESD) program, was interviewed to provide background information about the program, including its history and original intent as it pertained to school culture. He has trained schools around the country in the use of this program. Several schools and districts in this Midwestern state use the ESD program, although very few schools in the Cypress School District have been trained to use the program school-wide.

Effective School Discipline is an unpublished positive discipline program developed in 1998 at an alternative school in the midwest. As the sixth principal in less than a year, Larry Thompson, the creator of ESD, struggled with how to reach students who had such serious behavior problems the district had cut the building maintenance budget by 90% because the kids "would only destroy what we fix" (Larry Thompson, personal communication, November 25, 2009). Staff morale was low and the expectation of students' learning was close to non-existent. Mr. Thompson knew he had to introduce a behavior program teachers could easily implement.

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Having received training in several nationally known behavior programs, Mr. Thompson's experience was the other programs, although sound in theory, were so complicated he was convinced he "couldn't get people to actually do them." Therefore, he began to work on a system that was simple to understand and to put into practice.

In the Effective Schools Discipline program, discipline is viewed as another area of learning much like math or language arts. It begins with teachers modeling how to remain calm and problem-solve through a situation by using refocusing techniques and dialogue. When a student misbehaves, a teacher uses the opportunity to teach the student how to take responsibility for his or her actions while supporting the student emotionally. A guided conversation called "Give 'em Five" is used to ensure the teacher keeps the conversation positive and supportive for the student. Give 'em Five contains the following components: (a) support statement, (b) breakdown of expectation, (c) statement of expectation, (d) benefit for the student, and (e) closure to the conversation. These five components can occur in any order and can sound different in a variety of situations. The idea is to give teachers a tool to dialogue with the student about the behavior expectations, while maintaining a respectful tone and posture. For example, if a student begins reading a book instead of beginning the math assignment the teacher might approach the student and say in a private conversation, "Tom, I know you really enjoy reading and you've enjoyed this new series of books. I noticed you didn't get right to the assignment as requested, but instead continued to read your book. I expect you to begin the assignment right away so I can answer any questions you might have before you take the rest home for homework. Giving you the opportunity to ask questions as you complete the assignment is important to me because I want you to be successful. Can I count on you to put your book away during math class and begin your math assignment?" Although this conversation may seem

mechanical and forced in the beginning, with practice, skills are quickly acquired that make these conversations genuine and practical. Students are given the opportunity to redirect themselves to the expected behavior without being embarrassed in front of their peers.

Of course, not every student complies quickly. During the ESD training, Mr. Thompson introduces the idea of three levels of students. Student 1 is the student who misbehaves but can be redirected quickly with no argument and realizes he or she made a mistake. The majority of interactions in a classroom will be at the Student 1 level. Student 2 is the student who misbehaves, but may provide resistance or argument when the teacher tries to redirect the behavior. This student might be asked to spend time "refocusing." Refocusing looks different at different grade levels. In the primary grades, students who need refocus time sit on a red mat on one side of the classroom, away from the rest of the class. The mat signals to the student he needs time to think about his behavior and begin to formulate solutions to the problem. When the student has calmed down and begun to think more clearly, he moves himself over to a yellow mat. The yellow mat signifies the student is calm, but is not yet ready to talk about the situation or possible solutions. The student moves himself to a blue mat when he is ready to talk to the teacher without arguing or showing anger, and when he is ready to share possible solutions to the problem. It is important to note sitting on the refocus mats is not punishment. Students are encouraged to use the mats to de-escalate their emotions and to prepare for dialogue about the situation with the teacher. At upper grade levels, the mats are replaced with other tools such as colored chips to help students work themselves through the system. Eventually, older students do not need tools to support them and can dialogue with the teacher at a more mature level.

Student 3 is one who continues to argue, becomes belligerent, or shuts down even after the teacher has dialogued with him. This student is referred to the principal's office for follow-

up. The difference in this program from others, perhaps, is the fact an office referral is not an automatic heavy-duty consequence. The principal continues to dialogue with the student in order to model how to take responsibility for one's actions and how to problem-solve through a situation. The goal is for the student to return to the classroom so learning can continue. Once a student has been referred to the office, the principal dialogues with the student, helps the student come up with a solution, and then takes the student back to class. When the student returns to class, it is important for the student to share with the teacher how he is going to solve the problem, then the student asks the teacher if he can rejoin the class. This does not mean consequences are not given for student misbehaviors, but the focus is on the student learning from the situation in a respectful way, not on the consequence itself. Logical consequences are given when necessary, just as they would be given in any other discipline program. However, consequences are never given to a student without being accompanied by dialogue that helps the student understand their misbehavior, the expectations of the teacher, and the benefit to the student for complying with the expectations. In ESD, consequences are used to support the student learning about how to manage their behavior, not merely to punish them for making a poor behavioral choice.

The Give 'em Five conversations also hold teachers to a higher standard where sarcasm, dominance, and mean-spiritedness have no place. Mr. Thompson encourages teachers to take the things they say to kids and put them through two filters:

1. You're watching your own child be corrected, the child you love most in this world, and you watched the teacher work with them and guide them through the problem in the same way you just worked with this student. Would you feel like the teacher built your child up where she wanted to work even harder for the teacher tomorrow or not

want to make the same mistake again? Or, would it have torn your child down where

she wanted to give up and not go back to school tomorrow? Both can get a change in

behavior, but one does not get a lasting change.

2. If your supervisor gave you feedback the same way you just gave it to a child, would

you want to work for them? Would you want to see their initiatives succeed, and

would you stand behind them and work as a team? If your supervisor corrects you in

front of all of your colleagues, you probably won't want to work there anymore. For

too long we've thought it's been okay to do this to a child and expect him to come

back with a good attitude.

These filters were designed to ensure Give 'em Five conversations occur with the child's best

interest in mind. The teacher enters these conversations with the idea she can help this student

work through the problem without having to ask him or her to leave the classroom. Sometimes,

students do have to leave as outlined earlier, but it is never without the opportunity to make

amends and take ownership of their behaviors.

Shelley Elementary was asked by the Cypress School District to implement an additional

positive discipline program in the fall of 2010 as part of a district-wide initiative. This program,

called CHAMPS from Safe and Civil Schools, is described in the next section.

Safe and Civil Schools Program - CHAMPS. Dr. Randall Sprick, director of the

consulting company known as Safe and Civil Schools, created a behavior management program

based on the acronym CHAMPS. CHAMPS stands for **C**onversation (Can students talk to each

other during this activity?), **H**elp (How do students get the teacher's attention and their questions

answered?), **A**ctivity (What is the task/objective? What is the end product?), **M**ovement (Can

students move about during this activity?), and **P**articipation (How do students show they are

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fully participating? What does work behavior look/sound like?) (Sprick, 2009). In this model, Dr. Sprick believes that CHAMPS will guide the teachers in making effective and successful decisions when faced with opportunities to manage behavior. They accomplish this by being both positive and proactive with the students. Dr. Sprick chose the acronym CHAMPS because the letters reflected the major categories or types of expectations that teachers need to clarify for students regarding activities or transitions that occur throughout the school day. He also believed, by using this model, "teachers [could] help every student exhibit behavior that will make that student feel like a champion" (Sprick, 2009, p. 4). The positive and supportive nature of this model allows students to feel valued and respected while teaching them proper behavioral expectations.

The CHAMPS model is based on practices supporting student growth in the area of behavior management. The following five principles or beliefs create the acronym STOIC and are used by the classroom teacher to assist them in thinking about their overall approach to discipline. STOIC stands for **S**tructure your classroom for success (**E**ffective teachers structure their classrooms to support students using responsible behavioral practices.), **T**each behavioral expectations to students (Effective teachers tell and show the students exactly what they expect of them during a variety of activities both in and out of the classroom.), **O**bserve and supervise (Effective teachers constantly monitor behaviors by moving around the room and by using data to make decisions about chronic student misbehaviors.), **I**nteract positively with students (Effective teachers reinforce responsible behavior more frequently than responding to misbehavior.), and **C**orrect fluently (Effective teachers preplan how they will respond to misbehavior in order to maintain a calm and consistent manner in an effort to not disrupt the flow of instruction) (Sprick, 2009).

When CHAMPS is implemented well, it has the capacity to improve student behaviors and prevent misbehaviors from occurring by being proactive in nature. The success students find while using CHAMPS can lead to an increased sense of connectedness to school and increased academic achievement. Teachers may feel an improved sense of efficacy and a more positive attitude toward their job (Sprick, 2009).

CHAMPS and ESD fit very naturally together. Since CHAMPS establishes the expectations for behavior in identified areas around the building, including within the classrooms themselves, students know exactly what they are expected to do and how they are expected to behave. If a student chooses not to follow the expectations, and simple teacher corrections do not improve the behavior, the CHAMPS expectations can be easily woven into a Give 'em Five conversation with the student. Basically, CHAMPS is before a misbehavior occurs and Give 'em Five is after a misbehavior occurs. Both approach discipline opportunities as a respectful exchange between teacher and student and believe student dignity should be maintained at all times.

A Need for a School-wide Positive Discipline Program

The teaching and support staff at Shelley Elementary were trained in Effective School Discipline in 2008 and CHAMPS during the 2010-2011 school year, however, prior to 2008 there was not a consistent behavior or classroom management program used throughout the school. This lack of an adopted school-wide program led to several issues including an excessive number of office referrals, inconsistency among staff members on how they handled the same discipline situations, and students were missing large amounts of class time for being ejected from the room for any offense the teacher deemed worthy of a trip to the office.

Office Referrals Out of Control

Jane Thomas (pseudonym) was quickly overwhelmed by the number of office referrals sent to her every day when she became the principal of Shelley Elementary in the fall of 2007. Ms. Thomas would frequently ask her child study team members to help her work through behavior referrals in a timely manner, since there were too many for her to process alone. Ms. Thomas explained it this way,

> Discipline was out of control. I felt like it was a revolving door at my office … I ended up having my child study team helping with referrals, and basically had someone else deal with some of those things so I could get some other stuff done that needed to be taken care of. It was taking over my day.

The sheer number of referrals did not allow Ms. Thomas to attend to any of the other important duties in order for her to be an effective principal. She struggled to keep up with not only talking with each student to decide appropriate consequences, but also with the paperwork involved in documenting all the referrals. By February of 2008, more than 200 office referrals had been recorded since the first day of school. At that point, Ms. Thomas threw up her hands and decided to forego entering information into the district behavior problem database because she was simply too overwhelmed to complete the task. One teacher remembered the numbers of students Ms. Thomas was facing and shared, "There would be lines of kids outside the principal's office. Kids who had been sent to the principal because of discipline issues." The problem of so many referrals was due partly because teachers would send students to the office for a large range of offenses from very minor to severe.

Different Teachers, Different Expectations

Each teacher at Shelley Elementary was used to handling discipline in the way he or she

felt best. One teacher recalled, "I think there was a complete disconnect between the teachers in

the school as to how they would handle things." Students were referred to the office for a variety

of offenses that ranged from talking in class to physical altercations on the playground and in

classrooms. Another teacher explained that office referrals ranged from "one extreme to

another." Two teachers could handle the exact same situation in very different ways. For

example, one teacher might put a student in time-out for consistently talking in class while

another might send a student to the office for the same offense. Teachers discussed the issue at

staff meetings, acknowledging expectations were inconsistent and were not "really working for

our kids." They talked "about how we should get something more consistent" throughout the

school, recalled one staff member. Another staff member spoke of the behavior issues in the

years prior to adopting a school-wide program in this way, "We just had horrible behavior here,

and we had decided that we needed something that we all did." Inconsistency between staff

members when dealing with student misbehaviors not only led to a great number of office

referrals, but also contributed to a negative school climate that could be felt throughout the

school.

Tensions Rise with Office Referrals

Another reason behind the need to adopt a school-wide discipline program was the

overall negative feeling of the school when you walked in. One teacher shared,

> When I first came, you could feel it the minute you walked in, the tension in the building.
>
> It was not a happy place to be. I know that one of our Assistant Superintendents would
>
> walk through and visit and he noticed as well that it was not the best.

During casual observations and discussions, several staff members described incidents where students were yelled at in the hallways and the use of sarcasm was often present when dealing with their misbehavior. Another staff member went so far as to say, "In my experiences, some of the discipline that was done before was definitely not appropriate … I did see some things before that were kind of scary." The Assistant Superintendent visited with Ms. Thomas about the negative climate in the building and made suggestions for how it could be improved. Ms. Thomas and the staff recognized they needed a different approach to discipline and behavior management and set out to make a change.

Selecting a Discipline Program

That spring, Ms. Thomas asked several teachers and staff members to serve on a committee to evaluate a variety of discipline programs before bringing two programs to the entire staff for a vote. She explained, "It wasn't just me, it was teachers you know, I had a group so we had staff buy-in too." She chose teachers and staff members to be on the committee believing this would help the entire staff to buy into a new way of handling discipline. After discussing various program options, the committee quickly narrowed down to two final program choices, which were Effective School Discipline and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). The committee then visited schools that used both programs. They spent the day at these schools watching the programs being implemented and visiting with staff members about their feelings toward the programs. Ms. Thomas explained the process like this,

> We narrowed it down to two [programs], ESD and BIST. We went and observed BIST
> schools and we went and observed ESD schools so we could kind of see what [they are].
> We talked to staff members, we observed, we watched and, again as that team … We

looked at things that were the pros and the cons for each program, and made a list after

we came back and we talked about those things and then we presented that to the staff.

Following these visits, the committee returned to Shelley Elementary and created a list of what

they liked and did not like about each program. Committee members shared their observations

with the rest of the teachers and answered questions about both programs. The programs were

then put to a full staff vote, which included teachers, paraprofessionals, office staff, child study

team members, and custodial staff. "I believe everybody but one voted for ESD," shared one

teacher who served on the committee. Another teacher on the committee concurred by saying,

"We all voted on it so everybody picked it in a way." This belief that all teachers had a voice in

which program they would implement supported the committee's desire for buy-in by everyone

who disciplines students. Initial training for all staff members, which included everyone from

the principal to the custodians and lunch aides, began in the summer of 2008.

Training for ESD Proved to be Problematic

The initial training for Effective School Discipline occurred during the summer of 2008,

before school began. All staff members were paid to attend the two-day training held at the end

of July prior to staff returning for the new school year. Larry Thompson, creator of the ESD

program, was hired to conduct the training. The first day of training consisted of the background

and rationale for the program. Participants were expected to interact with the presenter and with

each other as they learned to identify Student 1, Student 2, and Student 3. They also practiced

writing a Give 'em Five conversation on paper and then shared their five points with a partner

for feedback. The second day of training provided a review of Day 1 and then an opportunity to

role-play Give 'em Five conversations in small groups. This allowed the participants the chance

to more realistically determine if the student (played by an adult trainer provided by Larry

Thompson) was still at Student 1, or if they have progressed to Student 2 or Student 3, which required different levels of response. A participant of the initial training at Shelley described the experience in this way,

> [Larry Thompson] came out and talked about it and he presented it to us then we broke into groups and did a lot of role-playing. We took the time to write out certain behaviors and to write out the Give 'em Five for it, and kind of make it our own.

Staff members were encouraged to practice the Give 'em Five conversation structure in order to make it sound more natural and less prescribed.

Most staff members were able to attend the training held at Shelley Elementary, and if they could not attend, they were encouraged to attend training at another school hosting a training. Staff members who could not attend an official training taught by Larry Thompson, were caught up by colleagues who had attended the summer training sessions. "Anyone who was not able to be trained we just brought them along and showed them what it was for training," affirmed Ms. Thomas when asked about make-up trainings for staff unable to attend. Therefore, from the start, not all staff members received the same depth or level of training.

Teachers were excited about the program in the beginning, and shared statements like, "The first few months everybody was excited about it" and "I was really pumped!" Most teachers and staff members echoed these feelings about beginning a program that provided consistency across the school. They were looking forward to knowing how to handle particular situations in a positive and proactive way. Ms. Thomas had revised the office referral form to include the five points to be covered during a Give 'em Five conversation. This allowed her reinforce her expectation to teachers that the Give 'em Five conversation be used while also

being able to collect information about the conversation that occurred between the teacher and student prior to the student being referred to the office.

Although all but one teacher voted to implement ESD, problems began to present themselves even during these initial trainings. "I know that at the training, having to role play, people don't enjoy doing that, and so you hear some grumbles about doing that kind of thing," explained one teacher. The role play portion of the training was intended to give teachers the chance to practice the Give 'em Five conversation so they would be better prepared to have a productive conversation with a student when the opportunity presented itself. Nonetheless, several participants were uncomfortable role-playing in front of their peers.

During their interviews for a position, Ms. Thomas informed new staff members of the expectation of use of the ESD program, and the staff handbook reinforced this expectation by stating, "It is the expectation that everyone uses the Effective School Discipline Plan at Shelley Elementary. There will be no individual classroom plans." Yet, as time passed and new staff members joined the staff at Shelley Elementary, the training for ESD became less structured. Ms. Thomas attempted to pay for new teachers and support staff to attend trainings being conducted locally by Larry Thompson. However, as budgets were cut, she was unable to continue this practice. She explained the dilemma in this way, "In the past, I've been able to send some of them and pay for the training for new staff members, but with budgets this last year a couple of them went on their own." One new teacher acknowledged, "I spent my own money and went to the training. It was like a three day training so that I would be on the same page." Budget cuts not only affected training for new staff, they also affected Ms. Thomas' ability to provide high quality, ongoing training, which led to difficulties when teachers attempted to put ESD into practice.

Once the 2008-09 school year began, several teachers started to struggle with parts of

ESD and requested support from the office. Ms. Thomas tried to support teachers by revisiting

the principles behind ESD and allowing teachers to practice role-playing Give 'em Five

conversations. She explained,

> I do remember having a staff meeting and going back through the things to talk about
>
> what does a Kid 1 want? Kid 2? Kid 3? Because between that Kid 2 and Kid 3 they
>
> were struggling. When do I send them to the office, when do I not? This is <u>not</u> an office
>
> referral, this <u>is</u> an office referral. Which kids does the district require that HAVE to be
>
> sent to the office? So talking about those things also made them understand [when to
>
> ignore things.] They couldn't always be in a battle with that kid.

Although Ms. Thomas incorporated role-play practice and ESD discussions into monthly

professional development meetings, by late fall momentum for the program had begun to slow as

teachers continued to struggle with implementation. In November, Larry Thompson and one of

his trainers came back to Shelley Elementary for a follow-up session to address

misunderstandings that had surfaced between staff members and the office. Ms. Thomas

described the follow-up session by saying,

> Patience was getting a little stressed as we're coming up on the holidays and stuff so
>
> Larry and [another trainer] came out and spoke to the teachers. He talked to us about
>
> some things going on and what's happening. We left it open so people were able to
>
> express what their concerns were.

One teacher affirmed the need for the follow-up session with Mr. Thompson. However, she

explained that not only did misunderstandings and inconsistencies lie within the staff, but they

felt office staff, particularly the principal, also misunderstood how referrals should be handled.

At one point this teacher told Mr. Thompson, "Ms. Thomas was not doing her part of it and that was what was frustrating. … I don't think she totally understands her part of it." Other staff members agreed and shared they also felt the administrator was not using the program correctly. These staff members' views about the administrator's misuse of the program are further explained in the Implementation Issues section of this chapter.

By the third year of implementation, when this study was conducted, the level of training had dropped significantly to become a watered down version of the original format. This was due to budget cuts, time constraints, and the district's expectation that district-wide initiatives took precedence over building-level initiatives. Ms. Thomas tried desperately to continue the program and provide the support she knew her staff needed to be successful. She described the most recent training in this way,

> At the beginning of the school year, we trained everybody, and we talked about it. I did a presentation about what it is, what Give 'em Five is, and what each kid looks like. Then we used leadership team members or leaders that knew it well and knew how to do it (they were always the kid so that way the other teachers wouldn't get out of hand) and then role played those problems so we could practice.

The role-play practice was something that used to be incorporated on a regular basis, but had not occurred as frequently due to time constraints on professional development days. Teachers and support staff members who were new to Shelley Elementary that year received only a half-day of training versus the full two days of training from the certified trainer, Larry Thompson. One teacher shared, "This summer there was about a half day in-service training for the new teachers in the building that incorporated all the staff and it was role model situations where we switched roles and practiced stuff." New teachers and support staff members felt unprepared for using the

program appropriately and part-time staff members did not receive enough practice to use the program with fidelity. A full-time staff member observed, "People that are only part-time here, even though they've had the training, I don't know if they are completely on board and understand it as well as they should." These issues all helped to create a problem with inconsistencies across the building and perpetuated misunderstandings about fundamental parts of the program. The principal, the teachers, and the students began to form their own perceptions of the ESD program based on their training, their personal experiences with it and their level of use.

Perceptions of the Effective School Discipline program

The implementation of the Effective School Discipline program affected everyone who worked or attended Shelley Elementary. The principal, the teachers, and the students formed personal opinions about the program and were willing to share their insights through focus groups, interviews, and casual conversations.

Principal: Positive Perceptions of a Positive Program

Ms. Thomas had been a huge supporter of Effective School Discipline since first hearing about it in the spring of 2008. She knew she wanted a program that was positive in nature because one that treated students with respect could, in her words, "change their outlook on life and how people treat them and how they should treat others." Her experience of dealing with such an onslaught of office referrals her first year at Shelley Elementary created the need to do something differently in order to make the environment better for everyone. By using a team of teachers to help her review various programs, Ms. Thomas believed she would have teacher buy-in once a program was chosen for implementation. She knew buy-in was critical to the success of any program implemented school-wide. The group discussed the importance of looking for

something positive. "What we liked about looking for something positive was how we talk to them," she explained; then went on to say, "We needed to change how we talked to them so they learned about respect." The importance of finding a respectful program quickly became the number one characteristic for Ms. Thomas when reviewing programs. She felt the ESD program best met the student's need for being treated respectfully and gave the staff a tool for how to talk with students appropriately about their behavior.

Once ESD was chosen, Ms. Thomas believed the initial training went well and that teachers were open to using the program. When asked what she believed to be the percentage of staff still using the program, she responded positively by saying, "I would say overall it's pretty good. I would say probably 90% or more. There might be a couple here and there." Her belief that most staff members are using the program school-wide is seemingly supported by the office referral data following the implementation of ESD. Since her first year as principal when office referrals numbered over 200 by February, the number of referrals had drastically decreased each year. The first year of ESD implementation saw office referrals reduced by 50%. Ms. Thomas explained, "It went from my first year here of a revolving door and not being able to get anything done, now to having - in some weeks I don't have any referrals, some weeks I have a couple." Students were spending more time in classrooms instead of being sent to the office for minor infractions. This satisfied another major goal for Ms. Thomas. "My ultimate goal was to get the kids back in the classrooms where they are learning. They're not learning here sitting in the office," she stated matter-of-factly. Ms. Thomas believed test scores would continue to go up if students stayed in the classrooms, even if they are sitting on a refocus mat at the time.

Ms. Thomas also felt the use of ESD had changed how she responded to kids. She described how she now thinks through her responses before she speaks with a student and uses a more respectful tone of voice,

> It's affected me because instead of yelling at a kid and getting in their face, thinking I have to be the really mean person you know, I can use, "I know your teacher talked to you about this, and you had that chance to stay in your classroom, and did you do that?" It gives them that chance to really think and calm down, and I'm calm too. I don't go home feeling frustrated.

By remaining calm and using the Give 'em Five conversation tool provided by ESD, Ms. Thomas felt she was better able to handle situations with students who came to the office for behavior incidents. She also reflected about how she believed ESD had helped students do a better job with student-to-student interactions and student-to-teacher interactions. Ms. Thomas shared her thoughts about how ESD was helping students make "a connection" regarding how to appropriately interact with others. She went on to state,

> I have seen more kids, even to me, say, "Hey I went up and apologized to that student!" and I didn't ask them to. I've seen them be more respectful to other kids and when talking to their teachers. And I think they understand when the teacher is not talking to them in the correct way. They voice those concerns.

These experiences with students encouraged Ms. Thomas to believe ESD is having a positive effect on the overall school culture. Interactions such as the ones described above are far different than the interactions that occurred before ESD was implemented. Ms. Thomas also stated that she is sure to mention the use of ESD as an expectation when she interviews potential staff members. "Anybody that interviews with me, I right away tell them about it. I say this is

what's expected. This is what I expect you to do for your discipline in your classroom." Ms. Thomas felt that establishing these expectations from the beginning eliminated the possibility that new staff members would be unclear as to her expectation of how they handle discipline.

With the implementation of CHAMPS as a district-wide initiative, Ms. Thomas shared concern the new program would overshadow ESD and the gains she felt they had made in the area of discipline over the past two years would be lost. She described her thoughts by saying,

> With the district implementation of CHAMPS, I think that sometimes that supersedes ESD. The good thing is when I go glance through the comments the teachers made regarding CHAMPS at the end of a training day, a lot of them mention ESD and how it tied in together. So I was like, "Good, they're still thinking ESD."

Ms. Thomas was relieved to find that CHAMPS and ESD seemed to work well together. She commented, "I think they work together. I don't think they by no means work against each other because CHAMPS are the expectations for the kids, so teachers can easily do a Give em' Five when students misbehave." She felt the way the two programs complement each other allowed teachers to use CHAMPS proactively to set expectations then use ESD reactively when a student chose to not follow the established expectations. She also believed the staff liked CHAMPS and saw the connection between the two programs.

Although Ms. Thomas believed that 90% of the staff members were still using Effective School Discipline with fidelity, she recognized that 10% were either only using pieces of it, or were not using it at all. She lamented, "I think there's those few now that don't quite follow it like they should because they feel like their ways work better." Ms. Thomas narrowed down exactly when she believed teachers struggled most with using ESD:

I think it's with certain types of kids, because I think that some kids [the teachers] think

will respond better if I get in their face and I say, "Hey, you've got to do this now!" …

It's like this is how I treat my own kids at home so this is the way I'm going to treat you.

Ms. Thomas attributed these misunderstandings about how to use ESD with all students partly to

a disconnect she sees between how some staff members want to see consequences handled and

how she feels consequences should be applied when students are referred to her in the office.

She described this disconnect,

Some of them feel like the consequence I give is not enough, not severe enough. They

want to see that kid, unfortunately, be punished, hugely, when I know the situation of

maybe the home life, or I know the situation of where the kid's coming from, or I find out

a few more details of why the kid's acting the way they are. I have other thoughts on it.

Ms. Thomas approaches consequences differently than some of her staff members, which led her

to feel as though some teachers do not support how she handled situations in the office. The

misalignment between how Ms. Thomas handled consequences, and how some staff members

believe consequences should be handled, created some distrust between the office and staff. This

contributed to staff members communicating perceptions about the Effective School Discipline

program that differed from each other and in many ways differed from those of the principal.

Teachers and Staff Members' Varied Perceptions of ESD

The teachers and staff members of Shelley Elementary shared a variety of perceptions

about the implementation of the Effective School Discipline program. There was little difference

between how the teachers felt about the program and how other staff members felt. The

comments and concerns from both groups indicated some common understandings as well as

some misunderstandings about the ESD program. They also revealed some contradictions

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between what the teachers and staff members said they wanted from a school-wide program and what they were willing to do. Several themes emerged after analyzing the perceptions of teachers and staff members: consistency of expectations and teacher response to students, the level of teacher buy-in and how that affected fidelity and consistency of implementation, the belief ESD does not work with the more challenging students, how ESD had changed the way teachers talk to students, and how the implementation of CHAMPS has worked with the ESD program.

Consistency of expectations and responses to student behavior. The teaching and support staff at Shelley Elementary felt that ESD had many of the characteristics needed for an effective school-wide program. Teachers and staff members agreed on the importance of consistent expectations for behaviors as well as a consistent response when students chose to misbehave. "I feel like consistency is the most important and just having the whole staff on the same program and with the same training so the children know what to expect in classrooms and also different parts of the building" explained one teacher. Other staff members agreed with this statement and supported the idea that a program which helped them provide consistent responses throughout the building was crucial for student and staff success. "The good thing is we all are trained the same way. I think that helps a lot rather than have each teacher going off in their own direction. There is some consistency," stated another staff member. A new teacher shared a unique insight by saying, "For a new teacher it made it a little easier for someone who had no experience in how to treat students and misbehavior. At least it gave me something that I could go through." The structure provided by ESD was welcomed by experienced staff members as well as new staff members, and contributed to the feeling that ESD could truly be used school-wide.

Lack of teacher and staff member buy-in leads to fidelity issues and inconsistent use of the ESD program. Another characteristic of an effective school-wide program cited by many staff members and teachers was the level of buy-in toward the chosen program by those responsible for handling student discipline. One teacher felt very strongly and stated, "It ONLY works if you have total buy-in. If you have like a missing piece, then the kids know and catch on, 'It's not being used there' and then just the whole fidelity of the program is gone." All participants felt that "total buy-in" by everyone was required to reach an effective level of consistency. One teacher even defined buy-in much like others defined consistency by saying, "Buy-in. Everybody is doing the same thing. Everyone has the same language. Everyone has that consistency to make it work." All staff members and teachers who participated in the study agreed that buy-in was an important piece to ensure consistency could be achieved across the building.

When the discipline committee brought ESD and BIST back to the teachers and support staff for presentations and a vote, most of them supported the adoption of ESD from the beginning. One teacher recalled the percentage of staff members who voted for ESD to be "high like 98%." Still, there was a discrepancy among teachers and staff members as to whether the entire staff actually bought-in to the ESD program. Although the vote for ESD was overwhelmingly in its favor, some participants felt some teachers and staff members voted for ESD without really supporting the principles behind it. They felt ESD was selected almost by default, as the other option was not possible within existing resources. One staff member explained,

> I think the biggest reason we didn't go BIST is because we had to hire someone to
>
> manage … an extra room and we didn't have either one of those and knew we couldn't

get it. So I think that was more than 50% the reason we didn't go BIST and we went

ESD.

She acknowledged the staff "liked the positives about ESD," but went on to say if they "were

able to hire someone for BIST and had an extra room we may have gone that way." The BIST

program required an extra room, called a Recovery Room, be available where teachers could

send students who were no longer being productive in the regular classroom due to behavioral

issues. The Recovery Room was supervised by a trained staff member at all times.

Although consistency was most important to staff members and teachers when describing

an effective school-wide program, it became obvious to many of them that consistency was

going to be compromised by some people choosing to follow only parts of the program. One

teacher explained the problem in this way,

There are a lot of teachers who do follow the Effective Discipline and so they go through

the five step process. And then there are teachers who adapt the process to make it

maybe one or two or three steps. Then there are teachers who, I think, sometimes do their

own thing. So I would just say as far as the whole school by itself, you know, it could be

very widely interpreted.

Participants recognized the difficulty in actually having consistency across the building.

While some of them believed the program should be followed just as it had been outlined during

training, others believed they should have the option to make the program their own and did not

think this would compromise consistency. For example, one teacher shared, "I know there's

gotta be SOME things that stay the same, but I want to be able to manipulate it to do what's right

for my kids that year and what feels right for me." Another agreed by stating that she would like

the ability "to take Effective Discipline and then tweak it. I know it needs to be the same on

some levels across the board, but tweak it to what I feel comfortable with." Other teachers agreed and stated they often have similar conversations as a Give 'em Five with students. "I usually do Give 'em Five, but it may not be all five steps. But it's similar expectations," a teacher explained. The staff seemed to understand the ideas behind the Give 'em Five conversations, but did not feel they needed all five steps to achieve the same result.

Several participants also shared they liked the refocus mats after they were able to make adjustments to how they were used. After trying to use the refocus mats properly, one teacher shared she changed how they were used, "When they go to the mats, there's a think sheet that I have them fill out that they write what they did, what they should have done, and better choices they could have made." She then adds a short note from the teacher to the bottom of the think sheet and sends it home for the parents to sign. Once teachers began to change the program from what they had been trained to do, to what they felt comfortable doing, ESD began to break down to the point some of the program's core principles were lost. Teachers observed discrepancies with how some staff members used the program and some used only the parts with which they agreed. A teacher explained,

> I think that most of the teachers buy-in to the part that we don't want to just yell at our
> kids all day long. … I think there's parts of it that people buy into and are doing, and
> there's other parts that they don't.

This version of "selective" buy-in seemed to be widespread amongst staff members and led to many of the frustrations about the program. Another staff member described it in this way,

I know there's a lack of buy-in because people talk about it. Everybody complaining that it takes a while to Give 'em Five and it doesn't always work. Or, you hear a lot of, "Well that may work for some kids but it doesn't work for this one" or "It doesn't work in my room."

Staff members described ways that ESD worked and did not work throughout the building and with certain students such as those considered to have more extreme behavior issues. These students were seen as the most difficult to work with and all of them had individual behavior plans, which staff members believed did not always work in concert with ESD. To illustrate, one teacher shared, "I do have several students who are on their own individual behavior plans outside of Effective School Discipline because it doesn't work for them and so we have to do other things." Having to find other ways to manage student behavior was identified by some participants as a reason why they were not currently using the program.

When asked what percentage they believed still used ESD with fidelity, several staff members said something similar to this statement, "I would say that we're probably at 75-80% use it with fidelity." Another teacher agreed with 75% but added, "Maybe I just see the rosy side." The percentages were surprisingly high after hearing the frustrations voiced during individual and group interviews. One teacher who said she believed the buy-in at the beginning was at 98% shared she believed only 40% use the program with fidelity today. When asked how she accounted for the difference in percentages from the beginning of implementation to now, she replied, "Laziness for one thing. I think teachers are just like, 'Instead of Give 'em Five, I'm just gonna tell them to stop.'" Although this teacher was one of two teachers to identify "laziness" as the reason more staff members were not using ESD, others shared their opinions of the difficulty they had with incorporating the ESD components.

Belief that ESD is less effective with many problem students. If a class had a large number of students with behavior problems, teachers felt the program was not workable. Several participants found it difficult trying to manage all of the behavior issues in the classroom using the ESD program. This teacher explained,

I had a lot of problems in my classrooms so I just kind of threw it out. I can't keep doing

this all day long. It is exhausting for me. I was feeling like I wasn't doing any good, any

teaching. I was only talking to people and sending them to the mats for two years and I

was just exhausted from just that.

This teacher reflected that since ESD's adoption in 2008, two years prior to this study, she felt all

she had done was send students to the refocus mats over and over again. Her frustration finally

convinced her to abandon ESD altogether until this year, when she felt she had a class good

enough to make it work. Many agreed the refocus mats were needed but found themselves

wondering what to do when they had more than one student that needed to refocus, but only one

set of mats. One staff member observed,

That's when I find it's the hardest to use ESD when there are more than 3 chronic

behaviors in the classroom. If it's one or two, I think ESD and the mats work great. If

there's more than three, or the rest of the class can't wait 15 seconds for you to Give 'em

Five, that's when it becomes difficult.

When the number of students needing behavioral attention from the teacher rose to greater than

three, teachers did not know how to effectively apply the ESD strategies. With so many staff

members and teachers sharing frustrations about using ESD with large numbers of students at a

time and with the more extreme behavior students, one teacher brought up the inconsistency she

saw between these views and why ESD was created in the first place,

Larry Thompson… worked with kids who were all [very challenging]. That is what this

program is for. So we're obviously not using the program correctly if it's not working

for our [challenging] kids. … ESD is for those kids so there's a connection lost.

Even though this point was made, teachers continued to bring out that ESD was not effective for their more challenging students and that those students had to have separate behavior plans outside of ESD. Staff members were not required to use ESD techniques, such as Give 'em Five conversations or refocus mats, with students who had a separate behavior plan. One very frustrated teacher described several situations in her room where she tried to use ESD, but the student quickly got out of hand and she had to call for assistance from the office. She described the incident in this way,

> I had a student who got angry. I tried Give 'em Five and he wouldn't respond so the next step was to move him to the mats. Well, he went to the mats and he threw them around and then he started kicking things. Then he started running around the room. … So then I had to call the office, which is not effective discipline at all. That's just calling the office to get someone up here.

While explaining this incident during a focus group, other teachers were looking down and nodding their heads as if they had similar stories to tell.

ESD had changed how teachers talk to students. One major component of the Effective School Discipline program was the use of Give 'em Five, a positive and constructive conversation with students. Teachers and staff members agreed with the respectful philosophy of ESD; however, many of them struggled with putting those conversations into practice in their classrooms. Much of the initial and follow-up training was centered around the rationale for having these conversations with students and allowing the teachers to practice Give 'em Five conversations in order to make them feel more natural during delivery. Most teachers and staff members shared positive opinions about the need to speak with students respectfully. "For the most part, the Effective School Discipline program has made me a little more conscious of what

I say to kids and how I say it," reflected one teacher. Another teacher commented on how she spoke to students prior to the training,

> I'm one that I'm really loud anyway … and got loud easily with the kids. Then we
> started doing this and I just started thinking about, "You know, I wouldn't want
> somebody talking to <u>my</u> child that way," even though I wasn't attacking them.

She went on to say that she felt that going through the ESD training had improved the school atmosphere by making everyone aware of how they talk to students: "It's a more respectful environment, and I really think I see that throughout the school. I would want my kids' staff doing this. I would want my kids to go to a school that treated their kids this way." Other teachers agreed with this statement. They provided examples about how some teachers who are only part time or new to the school sometimes are viewed differently because of how they treat students. One teacher provided this example,

> I actually had an incident this year where one of the new teachers who isn't here all the
> time, like for an exploratory class, yelled at my kids in the hallway, just like yelled very
> publicly. My kids were just shocked, because, even though there's some teachers, like
> it's not like I've never raised my voice, but they just aren't used to that here. They were
> shocked and didn't really know what to do. And all the teachers who saw it in action
> were like, "WHOA! That is not what we do."

She felt the climate at the school was much more positive now than before ESD was implemented and believed that speaking to students disrespectfully was not accepted anymore.

CHAMPS and ESD. The implementation of CHAMPS seemed to be well received by many teachers and staff members. Most felt that CHAMPS and ESD worked seamlessly together and supported one another. One teacher observed, "I don't think they are in competition

because CHAMPS is more about the atmosphere where ESD is for when something happens in class." Another teacher explained her views by saying, "I think they go well together because to me CHAMPS is proactive. It is before the behavior, before the activity and ESD is my reaction to the behavior. So for me they go together very well." These sentiments were echoed by a number of other staff members during the individual and group interviews. The positive attitudes towards CHAMPS were attributed to the fact that students seemed to be responding well to the new program. One teacher stated,

> I am pretty excited about CHAMPS. I have found it be effective already in the classroom just because it lays out perfectly for the students. This is what I expect. This is how you should do it. I think that's very effective.

Teachers set up their own CHAMPS expectations within their classrooms and common areas such as the hallways, lunchroom, and bathrooms were set up with common CHAMP expectations. So, regardless of what is taught or the age of the student, the same behaviors are expected by everyone, and of everyone, in these common areas.

For a few teachers, however, the addition of CHAMPS was a burden. One newer teacher on staff lamented,

> I feel like it is a lot. I mean I like both, I just wish there was consistency because I see them complementing each other really well. But it just feels like I'm CHAMPing them all day, I'm Giving Five all day, and it takes so much time, and … I'm trying to follow the rules. So I have my CHAMPS poster and they read that, and then they don't follow it so I go do Give 'em Five. So how do I do it? I'm running out of ideas.

This teacher felt as if all she did all day long was CHAMPS and ESD. She questioned how much teaching of content she was actually doing. Another staff member shared her concern

about the expectation there be a CHAMPS poster or card for each activity by saying, "It sounds like a lot of work for these teachers." Most teachers, however, did not seem overwhelmed by the amount of time it took to create the posters and felt the time was well spent for the pay-off they were seeing in the classroom and throughout the school. Overall, CHAMPS had been a positive addition to the school-wide discipline plan and was seen as working hand-in-hand with ESD for those teachers still using it.

ESD and caring for students. Several examples of caring deeply for the students and their success were also heard from teachers and staff members during the interviews. Teachers talked about the importance of considering the students' needs when disciplining them for misbehaviors. One teacher explained her ideas by saying,

> It needs to be as emotionally neutral as possible because it's not about the fact that I'm angry with you. That is not the point. The point is you can't learn when you crawl under the table because the problems are too hard. You're the one who's missing out. … It's about helping the students understand that it's about them and then getting their needs met.

She was very passionate about the fact that students need to know the teachers are there to help them learn what to do differently, not just punishment for a poor choice. Another teacher explained her feelings towards her students by saying,

> When I sit down with kids and we talk, I really try to make it clear to them, "I love having you in class. I want to make this work. I value you." I've really tried to get that across to kids. And I reflect all the time, you know, I've been on this kid's case, how do they feel?

This teacher felt it was of utmost importance to constantly be considering how the children feel, particularly when you have high expectations for them and they haven't been meeting those expectations. A staff member shared that she responded to students differently now than before she learned ESD because, "I value something different. It's not about scaring kids straight. I am trying to help kids think about what they're doing." For this staff member, the focus shifted from simply controlling behaviors to helping students understand their behaviors and finding solutions that work.

Several teachers shared they now believe the only way to truly meet students' needs is to meet them where they are and figure out what is behind the misbehaviors. One teacher described the change in this way,

In the past it's kind of seemed like we've attacked the behavior of the kid and we really haven't figured out what's causing this behavior. We just keep punishing FOR the behavior, but in CHAMPS we're just getting into what is causing the behavior. Is it attention getting? Is it avoidance? Is it all of the four different things? And we're starting to look at all the scenarios to see what is the cause of the behavior. If we don't figure out what is causing it, it is going to continue.

She believed CHAMPS was going to be a huge asset in helping them figure out why some students act the way they do. Another teacher agreed by saying, "We can try everything under the sun, but it's not gonna work until we find that root cause." Taking the time to get to know the students better and learning more about the world they live in will help the teachers better meet the students' needs.

Teachers who were willing to build strong relationships with their students and looked for the connection that will lift the student to a new level were easy to spot. They got down on

the students' level when speaking with them, and their voice level was always low enough to prevent others from hearing the conversation. One staff member shared this observation about teachers who use ESD effectively,

> The ones who use it consistently, you can tell because they DO have that relationship with the kids and there's that level of respect. The kids aren't in fear of them or their tone or that they're gonna get ripped apart. So the ones that use it, you can tell they have a better relationship with the kids and that the kid can trust them and they know what to expect.

Observations supported this statement on several occasions. There were a handful of teachers who treated students with respect every time they were observed interacting. Whether the students were behaving appropriately or not was irrelevant. The students responded to these teachers respectfully as well, even when they were being asked to sit out an activity or make an apology.

Overall, teachers and staff members believed ESD is a good program. Ironically, even after sharing all their negative feelings and frustrations about ESD, teachers and staff members still shared positive feelings towards the program itself. One teacher stated, "I really like the program. Like I said, I don't do Give 'em Five every time, but I would do it again just thinking that we would have to have complete buy-in all the way through." Another teacher shared her positive experience with the refocus mats during a previous year when she had several challenging behavior students,

> I think that it's a great piece because I would have kids that would go over there on their own sometimes. … I like to see them go through and transition through the mats on their own and most of the time it was always where they should be. You could see it on their

faces and in their body language. They would cool down and be ready and apologize

before you even said anything.

She credited the refocus mats for de-escalating several situations throughout the year before they

became bigger problems.

In general, teachers and staff members agreed the program itself was not the problem.

Teachers continued to emphasize the fact they felt like office support and implementation

problems from the beginning had doomed a good program for failure. One teacher expressed her

concern in this way,

I really do think that it's a great program and I would hope that gets translated somehow.

It just has to be very structured with the people involved in what you do in order to

succeed. … If somebody were to see it, they would think that this program isn't any

good, but it is. It's just not in its full glory here.

Most agreed they would consider trying the program again if the office could guarantee a

different type of support and if all staff members could be held accountable for using the

program as it was intended, instead of being able to change the components to something that

made them feel more comfortable. Both CHAMPS and ESD affected how teachers interacted

with students, and students had varying perceptions of whether those interactions were good or

bad.

Student Perceptions of ESD

The students at Shelley Elementary were eager to participate in focus groups and

observations. They spoke willingly and often piggybacked on another student's comments. The

students seemed to weigh their words and often apologized to each other if they felt their

statement had hurt someone's feelings. Their attitudes towards ESD varied depending on the age

of the students in the group. The first student focus group consisted entirely of fifth grade students. The second student focus group, conducted on the same day as the first group, consisted entirely of fourth grade students. These two groups had completely opposite responses to many of the same questions. Answers also were dependent upon which classrooms students were from. Students who were in the same grade, but were from different classrooms would have varying opinions on the use of ESD and their experiences with it. These contradictions indicated the need to conduct additional focus groups with students to gain a clearer understanding of how the students at Shelley Elementary felt about the ESD program and discipline in general. Two additional focus groups were interviewed several weeks following the first two groups. These groups consisted of a combination of third and fourth graders.

Together, all four groups represented students from third to fifth grade with a wide range of experiences in the area of discipline. Some of the students had been in trouble on a regular basis while others were rarely seen as behavioral issues. Of the 28 student participants 16 were Caucasian, seven African American, and five Hispanic with eight boys and 15 girls. All but two of the student participants had been at Shelley Elementary since at least 1st grade indicating mobility played little to no part in the student perceptions shared during these interviews.

Although students did not use the term Effective School Discipline, they did have varied understandings of the Give 'em Five conversation and refocus mats. They began the focus group by sharing how misbehaviors were handled in different classrooms. Some described situations when a student would sit away from the class due to a misbehavior and then would return to the class once the teacher had a chance to talk with them. One student explained,

Sometimes in our classroom when we get in trouble she either sends us outside to a chair

to talk to us privately. Sometimes she also sends us to the meditation station, which is

like a table in the corner of our room where she can talk to us privately also.

Other students talked about being sent to different classrooms and some even mentioned using

colored bean bags, colored cones, or refocus mats.

Student perceptions of the refocus activity. According to the students, the use of

refocus items varied. Some classrooms used them regularly. "Those red and yellow and blue

mats are called refocus mats and that's when you sit on them. When you get in trouble you

refocus on them," explained a student. Another student described the process used in her room

by saying, "You have to use these little bean bags, like red if I'm not ready, yellow is I'm

thinking, blue is for I'm ready to talk." Students also shared that some of the specials classes

used the refocus mats as well, as one student described, "Well if you get in trouble in music you

usually get on the red, yellow, and blue mats." The refocus system was used in some form

throughout the school with students using mats, bean bags, cones, or colored strips of paper.

Students clearly understood that when they moved to blue the teacher was supposed to

talk to them privately about their misbehavior. Several students shared something similar to this

student's comment, "In our class it's private because they really don't want other people to hear

about it." Other students expressed frustration about how some teachers addressed them

publicly. A girl expressed her feelings like this,

It makes you feel bad because some teachers don't make it a private conversation. They

just make it open where everyone can hear it. It's just not right for them to do that,

because then everybody knows what's going on and they shouldn't know everything.

These public admonitions led students to feeling singled out and embarrassed in front of their peers. Students who had made comments about being publicly called out also shared when they were sent to the refocus area, other students were allowed to make fun and stare at them. One student revealed he felt angry when being asked to refocus in his classroom "because everyone is staring at you and laughing." This student indicated that teachers often did not stop other students from staring and laughing at those asked to refocus.

Many students commented about the amount of time they spent in the refocusing area. The time ranged from ten minutes to several hours depending on where they were in the school when asked to refocus. Most classrooms seemed to work through the process quickly ranging from ten to thirty minutes. The teacher "doesn't really make us wait as long as 30 minutes. Probably like 10 minutes or less. That's only when we're like really bad," shared one student, whose experience with the refocus process was similar to others.

Other students talked about being in the office and having to sit on the mats for a long time. Some of these students had been to the office on more than one occasion while some students shared what they observed happening when other students were sent to the office. One student described her office experience by sharing that she had to "sit there for like two hours!" Another student concurred, "You have to wait like an hour for them to talk to you." The refocus mats are intended to calm a student down and allow them time to work through a reflective process during which the student considers ways he can make changes to his behavior and present a possible solution to the teacher when she comes to talk with him. Although the teacher or administrator does not have to immediately stop what they are doing to respond to a student who has moved to blue, they should try to get to the student in a timely fashion so the student is able to return to their seat and continue learning.

Students had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the mats. When asked about how the refocus system made them feel, one student replied, "A lot of kids, it makes them feel disappointed in theirselves because they know what's right or wrong. They can choose it, but they normally choose the wrong decision because it is the easiest way to go." Other students described how refocusing made them think about what they were doing and why the teacher sent them to refocus. One girl stated, "Whenever I sit on the red mat I feel sad about what I did to somebody or something. And I want to apologize, and maybe I needed to sit on the mat for what I did." A boy shared a similar comment, "I usually feel like I regret what I did, and then I just want to apologize." These sentiments were echoed by many students who felt the refocus activity allowed them time to reflect on their behavior and come up with a solution to the problem.

Several of the older students interviewed did not feel the refocus activity was successfully used. "I don't think they really work because some students might just stay there all day just to get out of working," observed one girl. This student believed that students might take advantage of the refocus activity by using it to avoid classwork. Another student shared his feelings by saying,

> It don't help at all because it don't even teach you nothing. It just teach you how to sit on the mat and then once you talk to them about what you did they don't even, there ain't even really a punishment because mainly you just sit there and do no work.

Some students misunderstood the purpose of the refocus activity and believed that punishment should automatically come with refocusing instead of using the time to get themselves back on track behaviorally. They seemed to believe refocusing was equivalent to a "time-out" often used in other behavioral programs. Although consequences or punishment might follow a refocusing

event, the primary purpose of the refocus activity is to allow the students to get themselves together so they can have a reflective conversation with the teacher regarding their behavior and their plan for improvement.

Student perceptions of the Give 'em Five conversation. A few students described interactions with staff members that indicated Give 'em Five conversations were used. One student described the quality of her teacher's voice when she came to speak to her privately. She shared that her teacher spoke in a "sweet voice" when talking to her and would ask, "Can you control yourself?" This student went on to say that her teacher was "actually trying to get me to stop because she doesn't want me to get in trouble and get suspended." Other students from this classroom agreed with this statement and indicated they believed the teacher spoke with them about behavior because she wanted them to be successful.

There were several stories shared during the interviews which indicated the teachers asked numerous questions of students outside the scope of the Give 'em Five conversation when processing misbehaviors. Students also shared several questions such as, "Why'd you do that? What caused you to do that? Are you gonna do it again? Have you learned your lesson? Has anyone asked you not to do it before?" The Give 'em Five steps contain only one possible question for the students to answer which is the final question of asking the student if they can comply with the stated expectations. The other four steps are statements made to students to help them understand how they are still valued, what they did that was inappropriate, what the teacher expects them to do now, and how they will benefit by complying with the expectations.

Relationships with classroom teachers and office staff. Overall, students felt respected by most teachers and had positive things to say about their relationships with their classroom teachers. Comments like, "I always invite her to my sports like football and basketball games,"

and, "I think the relationship between me and my teacher is good because all she wants for us to do is learn and do our best at what we're doing," were expressed in a variety of ways by many students. When asked how they felt when their classroom teachers corrected their behavior, one student commented, "I think our teacher wants us to listen whenever she's teaching so we can be prepared for next year." Most students agreed that the classroom teachers wanted what was best for them both behaviorally and academically.

Students who had been sent to the office for behavioral reasons had a mixture of responses as to how they were treated. Most students shared negative experiences when interacting with office staff members during office visits initiated by misbehaviors. One student explained his experience in this way, "They just start kind of yelling at you, telling you to say stuff, and most of the time when I'm sitting down there I feel really disrespected." Another student described an interaction with the principal by stating,

> A girl said that I called her the "B" word, but I didn't, but I got sent to the office. When I tried to tell Ms. Thomas they were lying because they don't like me, she thought I was lying. She put her hand up in my face and walked off and then came back and said, "Are you ready to tell the truth?" And I said that I was telling the truth the first time and she just ignored me.

This student felt like she never had a chance to share her side of the story before the principal judged her guilt or innocence. Students who were treated this way when sent to the office did not feel they had a positive relationship with office staff.

Conversely, a few students said they always felt respected when they had to go to the office for a behavior issue. One student shared that whenever he went to the office he had to sit on the refocus mats. Then Ms. Thomas talked with him calmly and said to him, "You really

shouldn't do it, so try to be better next time." Other students in this focus group nodded their heads in agreement when this statement was made. They reiterated the idea that the office was a safe place to come when a student got into trouble.

  Relationships with specials classes teachers. As for specials classes such as PE, Art, Music, and Library students were all in agreement as to what happened when students misbehaved in those classrooms. Students felt the specials teachers did not know them as well as their classroom teachers and this affected the relationship they had with them. One particular grade of students felt they did not even have a chance with some of the specials teachers because these teachers told them that they were the most disrespectful class in the school and shared that opinion with other teachers as well. One student lamented,

   I know that most of my classmates have a better relationship with their teacher than some

   of the other special teachers because usually our teacher respects us more than the

   specials teachers. They say that everyone in the building thinks we're disrespectful and

   stuff. Our teacher is really nice and says that we're doing a good job and all that stuff.

   Usually it's a special occasion if the specials teachers say we're doing a good job.

This student felt the specials teachers never shared a positive comment about his class. In fact, several students in his class agreed with his ideas. Another student shared, "In music sometimes when she gets really mad she says that all the other teachers say that our class is the most disrespectful class in the school. That's what she says right to our faces." The students believed they could not live down what the specials teachers were saying about them so they might as well live up to what was being said.

  Students who were not in the "disrespectful class" believed most of the specials teachers basically cared about them and wanted them to be successful. One student felt the specials

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teachers "talk to you to help you figure it out" when you do something wrong. Another student commented, "I only think that a couple of them actually care about us … like the PE teacher likes me, same with art and music. But library, she's like really mean and she doesn't like anybody. She lies to us and doesn't care what we say." All of the students were eager to share about how they felt they were treated in library.

Negative perceptions of the librarian. All four student focus groups brought up the librarian when asked about how they were treated in specials classes. In each group, the students would start out with quiet statements about the librarian such as, "The library teacher is a little bit mean." Another student in the group mumbled under his breath, "A little bit mean?" while others in the group giggled. Once they seemed comfortable with the idea they were not going to be punished for sharing a negative opinion about a teacher, many stories began to pour out about their experiences in the library. One example shared by a student was explained in this way,

> This one girl, she was after me in line. She didn't know where to put her books so she
>
> was thinking, because it takes her a while to think, to say her ABCs, and I get that. And
>
> when she put them in the wrong place, the library teacher yelled "NO THAT ISN'T
>
> WHERE THEY GO!"

Another student in the group continued this story by sharing what he heard the librarian say while mimicking her in a snide tone, "Does this letter go after this letter or does it go before?" He indicated this was how the librarian sounded most of the time when she was making students feel dumb or even cry. Students had numerous stories like this to share. They believed the librarian yelled at everyone on a daily basis. Some students even stated they felt happy coming to school unless it was a library day. "If we have library that just ruins my whole day because I'm frustrated." Student feelings towards the librarian were exactly the same no matter the grade

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or gender of the student. All of the students felt very strongly about the fact that the librarian was disrespectful and did not care about them at all.

Perceptions about CHAMPS. Students seemed indifferent to the implementation of CHAMPS. They knew what CHAMPS meant and could describe how it was used in various places throughout the school. "In the lunchroom and all throughout the school we have a CHAMPS poster, and it's conversation and all of that different stuff that you're supposed to do. Like in the lunchroom, conversation is zero," explained one student. The conversation expectation set forth by staff for the lunchroom requires that students not talk unless given special permission by a lunchroom supervisor. The school was only in the first six months of the implementation of CHAMPS when data was being collected so not much more than the definition of the CHAMPS acronym and basic expectations around the school had been introduced to the students.

Since the implementation of ESD three years earlier, several issues had hindered the success of the program including misunderstandings and misuse of the ESD program, a lack of trust between the principal and the staff, and deficit views held by the staff towards the low-income families they served.

<center>**Implementation Issues**</center>

Implementation issues from the very beginning were partly to blame for the ESD program not being followed correctly. Some of these issues have already been discussed such as problems with initial and ongoing training. Other issues proved to be almost too difficult for the staff of Shelley Elementary to overcome.

Teachers Misunderstood Parts of the ESD Program

Although all staff members were initially trained in the same way and heard the same information from Larry Thompson, widespread misunderstandings existed which hindered the ESD implementation process. Most of the misunderstandings occurred in the classrooms as teachers struggled with when it was appropriate to have a Give 'em Five conversation and when they should just "fly by" and quickly correct a behavior without stopping the flow of teaching. Many teachers seemed to think they should have a Give 'em Give conversation for all inappropriate student behavior. This teacher's complaint was typical,

> With the Effective School Discipline it takes a lot of time for me to stop my teaching
> with 23 students to go sit down with this one student and go through the five steps just
> because he was poking the girl with a pencil.

This teacher misunderstood that it <u>was</u> acceptable to go to the student who is using his pencil to poke someone else and ask them quietly to stop. Other teachers shared similar stories, which reflected their misunderstanding of when to use the Give 'em Five strategy. Another teacher commented, "It is easier to just say stop, than go through the five step process." This was just another example of how many teachers believed they had to use the Give 'em Five conversation every time they needed to respond to a student's behavior.

Other staff members recognized they were confused about when to use the Give 'em Five strategy. The possibility of utilizing a Give 'em Five coach was mentioned by one staff member as a way to ease her frustration. She described her situation by saying, "I'm one that would need him, seriously, in my room with tons of help. … I need almost on-site coaching of, 'This is when you would Give 'em Five and this is when you would say, Cut it out!'" She believed that if she could be coached in the moment, she would have a better handle on when to use certain

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strategies within the ESD program. One teacher remembered how Larry Thompson addressed the topic during the training. She recalled,

> That is something that he addressed because that's what everyone was saying, "You want me to stop every single time?" and he said, "No, there are things you can handle that way." If it's something that is repeatedly happening, I will talk to people, but for the most part I don't get to that step very often, but maybe I should a little bit more.

This teacher attended the same training as the rest of the staff and understood that she could talk with students in that quick, fly-by manner to curb some behaviors quickly. She also recognized that she might need to have more Give 'em Five conversations than she was having at that time.

Some teachers were confused about when to Give 'em Five and when to use the refocus mats. One teacher was waiting until the students were sent to the refocus mats before using the Give 'em Five technique then felt frustrated when she had more students needing refocusing than sets of mats. She complained about having ten students who needed to have a Give 'em Five conversation but she only had one set of mats in the classroom. She said, "That's also frustrating for me. I don't know how to handle ten kids at the same time that I need to be Giving Five to, and I have one set of mats." This teacher did not understand that Give 'em Five conversations could and should have occurred before the refocus mats needed to be used.

Another misunderstanding that occurred frequently throughout the building was during the use of the refocus mats or other objects chosen to assist students through the refocusing process. Some students described instances where they felt the refocusing activity was misused and were frustrated by the process. One student shared her experience in this way, "We have mats that we sit on, but if we move to the next color, and we think we're ready but they don't think we're ready, then they'll send us back to the color that we were at before." Students

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completely understood the purpose of the refocus activity and how each color was supposed to be used. They were frustrated that teachers would not respect their opinion about when they felt they were able to talk about their misbehaviors. One student made this astute comment,

> I don't really think that they work very good, the color system, because I know that sometimes if you go through it too fast they tell you to go back and then what's the point? If they're making you do it on their time, then why don't <u>they</u> just wait until <u>they're</u> ready?

The students shared many instances where they were asked to return to the red or yellow mats when they had advanced to the blue mat on their own because the teacher felt they had not thought long enough about their behavior.   One student shared, "We think that we're ready, but they don't think that." This student indicated when she moved to blue and felt she was ready to talk with the teacher, the teacher would often send her back to yellow or red indicating she had not taken enough time to think. Another student described a common scenario in his classroom by saying, "In our classroom we use beanbags, if we're on blue she just makes us wait a while if she thinks we went too fast." When ESD is used correctly, students are encouraged to move themselves through the color system at their own pace. When the student gets to blue, he should be able to state the misbehavior and share a solution or alternative behavior he believes will make the situation better in the future. If the teacher feels the student does not have a solution or has truly not thought about the behaviors, she can ask the student to return to the yellow marker, but only after she has tried to have a conversation with that student when the student has chosen to move themselves to blue.

For some teachers, the refocus mats had basically become another place for time-out. One teacher commented, "I think in the beginning people started using them more correctly, but

towards the middle and now they started turning them into a time-out spot." Students were consistently being sent to sit on the refocus mats for long periods of time. Oftentimes, a teacher would not process with the student once the student reached the blue mat. She would simply tell the student to stop doing whatever behavior had sent them to the mats in the first place and send them back to their seat. "Some teachers just say go back and sit down when we get to blue. They don't really come talk to us," reported one student. Students felt frustrated when they were trying to use the refocus mats properly, but were not given the opportunity to process the behavioral event which had caused them problems in the classroom.

Teachers admitted to frequently sending students out of the room rather than allowing students to refocus inside the room. "I use the buddy system across the hall and they go sit on her mats for a while. When she sees them move to blue, she'll bring them back to the door and they come talk me," shared one teacher. This teacher felt the students needed to be removed from the room so other students could learn while the offending student could get themselves pulled together. The practice of sending students to the hallway or to another classroom seemed widespread and was viewed by some teachers and staff members as a time-out rather than a refocus time as intended by the ESD program. A teacher explained it in this way, "If the behavior occurs again, they are usually sat off for a time-out. Then if that doesn't work, they try it in another room or something that works specifically for that child." This teacher was one of several who had reduced the refocus opportunity to a time-out and did not have a discussion with the student about his behavior once he returned to the room. Sending students from the room was exactly what the principal had said she did not want to have happen. "One thing we did not want to have was a place where kids could just get sent from the room," Ms. Thomas had explained when talking about what the committee looked for in a program. She believed the

students would be better off if students could stay in the classrooms and at least hear the instruction, even if they are refocusing on mats. Teachers were sending students out of the classrooms at a significant rate which indicated a contradiction between what the teachers believed was right for kids and what the principal believed was right for kids.

A significant reason that teachers had begun to send students to the hallways and other classrooms was centered on misunderstandings about the use of consequences in the ESD program. ESD supports the use of logical and appropriate consequences when accompanied with opportunities for the students to process the behavior through conversation and reflection. Many teachers believed they could not give consequences to the students. They thought the only consequence options available to them in the classroom were having a Give 'em Five conversation with students, or sending the students to refocus. Neither of these strategies was meant to be punitive when used correctly. The principal recognized early on that teachers were struggling with consequences so she brought Larry Thompson back for a staff meeting to address questions from staff. "We talked about consequences. What kinds of things can you do in your classroom to help them, rather than just sending them to me," reflected Ms. Thomas. She believed the follow-up conversation helped teachers understand other options available to them besides sending students to the office. Several teachers' comments indicated the misunderstandings still persisted. One teacher stated, "I've got some kids in my class, Effective School Discipline? No way . . . no way. They need consequences. They need stuff taken away, and they need a stern talking to." This teacher felt ESD did not allow her to give consequences. Another teacher showed her misunderstanding by saying, "I can see where, if I stay calm, that upset kid has a better chance of calming down than if I also start screaming … but I still have kids who needed to have a consequence." She believed the ESD program was only about talking

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with students calmly and respectfully. She did not understand that logical consequences could become part of a calm and respectful conversation. Teachers also had a huge struggle with how consequences were given once students reached the office, which led to a very significant implementation issue.

Lack of Trust in the Principal

At the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, staff members attempted to use the program as outlined during the trainings. "I think at the very beginning, it probably went the best ever because people were at least trying it," remembered one teacher. They tried to use Give 'em Five conversations and the refocus mats to manage student misbehaviors until finally, they needed to send a student to the office because the student was not regaining self-control. Once students arrived at the office, the office response was different than what the teachers expected and students were often sent back to class with little to no consequence. Many staff members believed that students should receive a consequence from the office if their behavior had warranted a visit with the principal. They were frustrated that "nothing happened" when they sent students to the office after they had reached their limit in the classroom. "I think that some people feel that there should be more severe consequences than what's been happening," shared a staff member. She had heard grumblings among teachers and staff members about how they were dissatisfied by the office staff's response to behavior referrals. Another teacher lamented, "If nothing happens as a consequence of going to the office then it becomes a reward because the office is a very entertaining place if you're a child." This teacher wanted students to dread going to the office and to be afraid of the consequences that might await them there. Another staff member shared that "teachers complain about no consistency in the office and about the

consequence not fitting the crime." Teachers wanted a plan established for certain behaviors to be given automatic consequences immediately.

The perceived lack of consistency, and in some cases, severity, in the delivery of consequences by the office also created a problem between teachers and the principal because teachers felt they were treated badly when they sent students to the office for, what they believed to be, legitimate reasons. One teacher shared her frustration in this way, "I thought I need to send them because they physically punched each other. I was told, 'You could handle that with Give 'em Five.'" She believed Give 'em Five was being used incorrectly by the office when an offense such as punching another student was relegated down to a Give 'em Five conversation. She went on to say that Ms. Thomas told her, "Well I was able to handle it with Give 'em Five. Why couldn't you just have done that in the classroom?" She concluded her point by stating,

If they physically punched somebody or there's one of those no tolerance things . . . yes, I

could talk to them, but there needs to be a consequence. I can give a consequence too,

but I think there are some things that need to get a consequence from the office.

This teacher struggled with something as serious as fighting having little to no consequence when referred to the office and then being made to feel it was wrong to send students for such an offense in the first place.

Another incident that contributed to staff members' mistrust of the principal occurred not long after ESD was implemented. Principals in Cypress School District are required to track their discipline data through a computer program provided by the district. The program allowed principals to break down behavior incidents according to which teachers make the referrals, what type of referrals are being made, and where and when the incidents are occurring. During a staff meeting, Ms. Thomas gave a document to the staff regarding recent discipline referrals to the

office. One staff member recalled, "They had a tally of how many students were sent to the office by each teacher. At a group meeting they made those teachers feel terrible." This particular event was mentioned during all three staff focus groups and also during some of the staff interviews. Another staff member described the event in this way,

> I think this is where people got leery. They printed out each teacher's name and who sent students to the office. It was a bar graph and they gave it to us at a staff meeting. … I don't think it really helped. I think as a teacher or as a human, you're gonna feel attacked. … It's like oh my gosh, everyone's gonna judge me.

Teachers did feel attacked and consequently began to send their students to other classrooms instead of sending them to the office. This strategy resulted in many teachers losing their desire to implement ESD and within a few months of the initial training sessions, their support for ESD began to wane. They decided to handle things on their own since they believed, "nothing is being done down there. So what's the point of sending them down there and making us look bad, like we can't handle our own class?" Teachers did not want Ms. Thomas to think they could not handle their students so they began to only send the most severe cases while handling other discipline issues themselves. As a result, office referral numbers went down, but not for the right reasons. One staff member observed, "I think that's what stopped the office referrals. They just got together with their team and decided they're gonna solve the problem themselves." She attributed the fall in office referral numbers to the fact that teachers were dealing with behaviors within their teaching teams instead of sending them to Ms. Thomas in the office. She went on to share that the behavior issues still existed; the office just was not recording them since students were no longer being referred there. Another teacher went so far as to say, "It's more about data and looking good than actually following through with what we're supposed to be doing and

changing the culture." She believed the office ignored many of the remaining discipline issues in order to look good in the district's eyes.

In addition, many teachers believed the principal and a lead teacher, who also helped with discipline, did not use ESD strategies correctly when dealing with students. The lead teacher did not receive the full training in ESD, as 2010-11 was her first year at Shelley Elementary. "Once they get to the office Effective School Discipline is not used. Ever," claimed one teacher. Another teacher explained her belief like this,

> I think part of it has to do with when the kids do get sent to the office it's not used there. And so they were kind of like, "Well why do I have to use it if the kids are just gonna sit in the office for four hours?"

This teacher was frustrated by her belief that she was being held accountable for using ESD, but the office did not follow through on their end and use it as well. She shared that she would like to see "some kind of accountability for the office because we are all held accountable." Accountability for the office came up several times since teachers felt that discipline during the 2010-11 school year had begun to be handled differently, although not with ESD strategies. They shared students were often subjected to yelling and threats when being disciplined in the office. One teacher described student experiences by saying,

> This year, we've had an addition to the office and things are getting handled but it's still not ESD. It's get the kid, and yelling, and threatening … them. Just in their face. Well, we went from nothing happening to yelling, screaming in your face, telling them they were gonna get kicked out of school.

Teachers were partly glad that discipline was being handled by someone new to the office staff, but they were frustrated and saddened by the fact it was being handled in such a disrespectful

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and negative way. Another teacher shared, "That's the thing. We're getting some help, but not the right kind of help." Most teachers still wanted the students to be treated with dignity and respect even when being disciplined.

Deficit Views of Low-income Families and Belief There Is No Parental Support

During individual and group interviews as well as classroom and whole school observations, a number of comments were made about the lack of parent support for improved student behavior. Teachers seemed to be in agreement throughout the building that parents were not going to help with any behavior problems and shared frustration that students were not held accountable for good behavior by their parents. One teacher commented, "That is a huge thing that we fight against is the lack of support from the parents at home." She had recently called several of the parents of her behaviorally challenged students and felt they did not care about how their students acted at school. Another staff member made a generalized comment about the work habits of several parents at the school by stating, "We have several parents that don't even work. I mean they are still laying up in bed when the kids are coming to school." This low opinion of parents was pervasive throughout the staff regardless of their position and seemed to enter conversations every time questions were asked about how the school staff could help the students be more successful behaviorally. One teacher went so far as to say,

> It's very irritating because we are all good parents. If we had problems at our kids' school we would so be there, and they would be in so much trouble, they would never do it again. But, that's not the reality with the parents that we deal with. They are NOT great parents. Some do the best they can do. They do what they know. Others, I think, don't care. We had a parent say to us just the other day, "You signed up to be a teacher. This is what you signed up for." Yeah? Not so much.

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This teacher's frustration with parent support was palpable. She indicated quite frankly that she did not think the parent support would improve because many parents either were unable to provide support or they simply did not care.

Many staff members made comments about the environment they believed most of their students lived in at home. Comments like, "Maybe they did get slapped over breakfast over nothing. They didn't do anything and they got slapped and they're upset. I'm sure that's true," and, "These kids come in angry from home. They come in from things that happen before they even get to school. It has nothing to do with school, nothing to do with us," were common ideas and mentioned continuously throughout the interview process with staff members. The staff of Shelley Elementary seemed to believe that almost all of the students come from homes where the leading parenting technique is to yell at the student for anything and everything. Teachers made comments like, "They're used to being yelled at. They're used to being scolded," and "The kids get yelled at at home enough," over and over again.

The perceived yelling problem at students' homes was touted to be one of the main reasons the staff looked for a positive discipline program in the first place. However, the students shared numerous occasions where they were "yelled at" by staff members during behavior incidents throughout the school. They shared that some staff members yelled more than others, but several students made comments such as, "I always get yelled at," and "Teachers are always yelling at me!" Students felt disrespected when they were being yelled at and none acted like yelling was something they were used to hearing at home. These comments came from students who indicated they were in trouble a lot and from students who indicated they were rarely in trouble. Some of the comments about yelling came from students who had never visited the principal's office and had never had their parents called for behavioral reasons.

Staff members also made negative comments about how students were being raised. They felt the students at Shelley Elementary had been exposed to things inappropriate for their age. One teacher remarked,

> It's hard when a seven-year-old knows everything that an 18-year-old should know. So that kind of plays into the discipline too, because you're dealing with an 8-year-old little kid, but mentally you're dealing with a 16-year-old.

This teacher went on to compare the students at Shelley Elementary to students at a more affluent, suburban school. "The difference is like my nephew who goes to [a suburban school], they're a lot more naïve than these kids. These kids know way too much," she explained. The staff's belief that their students were much different than other children of the same age at more affluent schools contributed to them struggling with believing that student behaviors could change.

Perceptions of the ESD program varied greatly between the principal, teachers, and students at Shelley Elementary. Students did not feel the program was successful, but did share experiences which described instances where the program had improved student/teacher relationships. Overall, there was a positive feeling towards the program by the principal and staff members, although they disagreed as to its level of effectiveness due to significant implementation issues. These implementation issues were caused, in part, by a school culture which prevented the most positive and sought after qualities of the ESD program to be implemented fully. All of these findings have led to conclusions and implications to be considered by other schools who wish to try implementing a school-wide discipline program. These conclusions and implications are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Schools are constantly trying to find better ways to reach students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. This effort has led to the implementation of numerous programs and strategies over the years. While the desire for school improvement is widespread, the rate of success at which programs are implemented is relatively small. This study concludes by analyzing the findings found in Chapter 4 to offer conclusions and implications for future implementation attempts. The theoretical frameworks used to evaluate these findings are Schein's (2004) theory of organizational culture and Nodding's (2003) theory of educational caring. Through these frameworks, I make sense of what occurred at Shelley Elementary School as they attempted to implement a positive discipline program to create a more positive culture throughout the school.

The Culture at Shelley Elementary Hindered the Implementation of ESD

Authors of school reform literature tend to agree that a school's culture is one of the most important predictors of program implementation success, as well as being one of the most difficult things to change (Fullan, 1995; Kruse & Louis, 2009; Senge et al., 2000). Some cultures support and encourage learning while others suppress it. A healthy, vibrant culture is essential for successful school development (Senge et al., 2000). Schein (2004) asserted that an organization's culture can be analyzed on three levels: artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and basic underlying assumptions. These three levels assisted in understanding the culture of the school when analyzing the findings.

Artifacts Provide Evidence of the Use of ESD and CHAMPS

Artifacts include all input which is seen, heard, or felt when a person encounters an organization and is unfamiliar with its culture. It is the most visible level of an organization's culture. Throughout the school, documents such as parent and teacher handbooks, the school improvement plan, posters on the walls, and refocus items around the school suggest that ESD and CHAMPS are being used by every teacher and staff member. Office referral data indicate referrals have been drastically reduced since implementing the program in 2008. Office referral forms have been updated to include a place where the teacher's Give 'em Five conversation can be recorded so the principal will know a conversation took place and what was shared during that conversation between the student and the teacher.

Schein (2004) warned, however, that it can be dangerous to draw significant conclusions from artifacts alone. He asserts feelings, judgments, and experiences can become part of the inferences made when considering the significance of the cultural value of the artifacts. Shelley Elementary school clearly wants the district, the parents, and outside staff members to believe they use the Effective School Discipline program and CHAMPS throughout their building and that the use of any other discipline program is unacceptable. The staff handbook states, "It is the expectation that everyone uses the Effective School Discipline Plan at Shelley Elementary. There will be no individual classroom plans." In addition, the principal shared that she had made it clear to all potential staff members during interviews that this school used the ESD program, and the program's use was expected of anyone who joined the staff.

CHAMPS seemed to be utilized more consistently throughout the building, especially in common areas where CHAMPS expectations had been centrally created. Because CHAMPS was new and teachers were currently being trained in its use, the program was more in the

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spotlight, and therefore, receiving a greater response from teachers at the moment. The

CHAMPS principles had not made their way into the parent or staff handbook, the school

improvement plan document, or website information at the time this study was conducted. This

can probably be attributed to the fact that CHAMPS training was initiated after the school year

had already begun and most of these documents were finalized prior to the beginning of the

school year.

There were also artifacts which implied that many staff members cared about the

students' well-being and worked hard to support the emotional and social sides of students.

Shelley Elementary had developed six "pillars" which centered around six character traits: being

a good teammate, being responsible, showing respect, having a positive attitude, being

trustworthy, and showing compassion towards others. Each of the six pillars had support

statements such as, "Finding the best way, maybe not necessarily my way" and "Caring about

how others feel." These pillars were posted around the school and were supposed to be used

when having conversations with students regarding their behavior choices.

The pillars were an attempt by the staff to not only outline some of the basic behavioral

expectations for students, but also to create a framework on which to build positive and reflective

conversations with students. Staff members believed that focusing student behaviors in a

positive way would lead to a more positive and caring culture. In Noddings (2003) theory of

educational caring, she asserted that most teachers do not understand the true nature of caring.

According to Noddings' theory, these pillars do not go far enough to guarantee students and

teachers enter into a truly caring relationship. Teachers who want the best for their students and

set expectations such as those outlined in the six pillars, will also need to model appropriate

ways to respond to frustrating or hurtful situations. Although I believe most teachers cared about

the students emotionally, I rarely witnessed a truly caring conversation as described by Noddings which replaces what the teacher wants with what the student needs. I also did not witness the use of the Six Pillars during any conversations between students and teachers, nor did any teachers refer to the six pillars during interviews or focus groups.

Certainly, if you only consider the artifacts, you would believe that ESD is used consistently throughout the school and that it is an important part of the school environment. However, there were many instances where ESD was only used partially, or was used after being modified to meet the expectations of the classroom teacher. Some staff members did not use the program at all.

Espoused Values and Beliefs Reveal Contradictions Among Staff Members

Schein (2004) contended that all learning that takes place in a group reflects the beliefs and values of someone in that group. This person (or persons, as a team can fulfill this role as well) is often identified as the leader of the group as they share their assumptions regarding what is best for the group as a whole. Schein called these values the group's *espoused values and beliefs*. The principal, staff members, and teachers of Shelley Elementary shared their values and beliefs regarding a school-wide discipline system. These values were what they said was important to them when considering the characteristics of an effective school-wide discipline program. Some of the espoused values shared by all participants were similar, but there were many contradictions between what the principal, staff members, and teachers claimed to value and what they actually <u>did</u> when confronted with a behavioral situation with students.

Saying one thing, but acting differently when confronted by a situation revealed what Schein refers to as *basic underlying assumptions*. Espoused beliefs and values can undergo a transformation into basic underlying assumptions if the group continues to experience success

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over a period of time based on actions taken by the group in response to the stated beliefs and values. Espoused beliefs and values will not become underlying assumptions if the group does not experience success collectively. Schein (2004) defined assumptions as solutions to problems which have been validated because they find success over and over again. These underlying assumptions live at the unconscious level, yet guide individual and group behaviors. Basic assumptions are very difficult to change since the group members may not even be aware they exist.

Respect or disrespect – which is it? The principal and staff said they valued talking to the students respectfully, but often responded disrespectfully when misbehaviors occurred. In this study, the principal set out to find a solution to the high number of office referrals she experienced her first year at the school. Ms. Thomas stated that she wanted a positive program which would not only improve student behavior, but would also treat students with respect and dignity. She believed students would respond better to respectful words since they are often receiving negative reprimands at home. Ms. Thomas spoke highly of the Give 'em Five conversation frame believing that it enabled her and the teachers to have respectful conversations with students. She repeatedly mentioned wanting to change how she and the staff talked to students so the students could learn about respect and change their outlook on life. She believed that respectful conversations would show students how they should be treated and how they should treat others. In Noddings (2005) theory of educational caring, modeling is the first critical component to creating a caring classroom and school. She asserted that by modeling a caring relationship, teachers can show students what caring relationships look like and feel like rather than just telling them. By desiring a program that models respectful conversations, Ms. Thomas was trying to build a caring relationship with her students. She believed the teachers

could also achieve these caring relationships with students if they followed the Give 'em Five outline.

In action, however, Ms. Thomas often felt pressured by lack of time and pressing responsibilities to use the Give 'em Five framework every time she worked with students. She was one of the most successful users of the framework within the school, but still struggled with its use each time she interacted with a student who was exhibiting inappropriate behavior. Some students reported being yelled at in the office or treated disrespectfully when interacting with Ms. Thomas. Others shared that Ms. Thomas always treated them respectfully and they felt the office was a safe place to go, even when you were in trouble. Staff confirmed these stories by sharing similar contradictions in how students were treated when sent to the office for behavioral issues. These varying reports support the conclusion that Give 'em Five was not used consistently in the office.

In addition, the job of discipline in the office often fell to a lead teacher because Ms. Thomas was frequently out of the building for district meetings or busy working on other important tasks. This teacher had not received formal training in the use of ESD, but was familiar with its principles. She praised ESD for its ability to de-escalate situations and said that she would definitely implement the program again if given the choice. However, students and staff shared instances where students were threatened with suspension or expulsion by this teacher when she was in charge of discipline. Several teachers shared stories about students whose special transfer status, which grants the student permission to attend Shelley Elementary even though they do not reside in the attendance area, was threatened to be revoked if the student didn't "straighten up." Yelling at students and threatening them with suspensions and expulsions

contradicts the stated values of changing the student's outlook on life through treating them respectfully. It also does not model for students what a caring relationship is all about.

The teachers and staff members agreed with Ms. Thomas by collectively saying they also wanted a program which emphasized talking respectfully to students. Their belief that students are constantly yelled at by family members influenced their desire for a program that promoted positive responses and maintained the dignity of the child. Yet, when they engaged in conversations with students about behavior, they admitted they didn't use the Give 'em Five conversation because they felt it was too time consuming or wasn't really necessary. Some staff members revealed they used two or three of the five conversation components, while others shared they just needed to tell students to, "Cut it out!" or say, "Really?" in order to manage behavior. Noddings (2005) considered dialogue a critical component to establishing a caring classroom. She posited that dialogue allows us to explain what we are trying to model for students, and allows students to ask questions. When the teachers dropped steps from the Give 'em Five conversation, or did not engage in a conversation with the student at all, a true level of caring was difficult to achieve. Students were robbed of the opportunity to learn from the experience, see a caring relationship modeled, and dialogue about the behavioral event. This left students feeling disrespected and belittled. So, while staff's espoused values and beliefs indicated it was important to speak to students positively and respectfully, the underlying assumptions were that respectful conversations took too long and were not worth the effort when a few choice words would garner the same results.

Principal valued in-class interventions, but teachers valued ability to send students away. Ms. Thomas valued a program which would allow students to remain in the classroom as much as possible so that learning could continue instead of being sent to the office where no

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instruction was taking place. She wanted to help the teachers understand which behaviors warranted an office referral and which behaviors could be dealt with in the classroom. Her primary reason was to reduce office referrals, but she also wanted to raise test scores, and believed that keeping students in the classroom would do just that. A follow-up training session was focused directly on this issue to clarify at what point a student should be sent to the office. Ms. Thomas felt the clarification session worked, as office referral numbers began to go down and remained relatively low compared to the numbers being recorded prior to the adoption of ESD.

Not all teachers or staff members shared the value of choosing a program that allowed students to stay in the classroom as an important characteristic of an effective program. In fact, some teachers shared that the Recovery Room provided by the BIST program had merit, and the reason they did not vote for that program was because they did not believe the money existed to hire a staff person for the room. They felt they had to vote for ESD almost by default. Ms. Thomas incorrectly assumed that since there was a high percentage of acceptance of ESD when the initial vote was taken, she had the teacher buy-in needed to make the program a success.

Initially, teachers tried to send students to the office when they felt the student's behaviors were too disruptive to the rest of the class, only to find the student returned to their room sometimes hours later. Many referenced what they had heard from Larry Thompson during the training when he indicated office referrals may go up at the beginning of implementation because teachers are choosing to address behaviors more consistently through the use of ESD. Teachers also felt they were unfairly admonished when they sent students to the office. They said Ms. Thomas frequently responded to them by saying, "I just Gave 'em Five.

Why couldn't you do that in your classroom?" when they sent students to the office. This made them feel as if she didn't believe they could handle discipline situations in their rooms.

So, although teachers voted overwhelmingly for the adoption of ESD, the underlying assumption was that some teachers only voted for ESD because they felt BIST was not a viable option due to financial limitations. Several staff members talked about how a high percentage of teachers wanted ESD over BIST at the time of the vote, yet very few were still using the program even a few months after the program was implemented. They wanted to be able to remove students from their rooms when behavior incidents occurred and did not feel the office was supporting these efforts. This made them second-guess their vote.

Teachers do not want to be publicly reprimanded, yet choose to reprimand students publicly. A defining moment in the implementation of the ESD program was shared by every adult focus group and reiterated during several individual interviews. During a staff meeting following the implementation of ESD, Ms. Thomas passed out office referral data with teacher names attached for all the staff to see. Many of the staff members and teachers shared their horror at having teachers singled out in such a public way. Teachers decided they would rather take care of behavioral problems themselves instead of being judged by their peers. Since they couldn't send students to the office, they found other ways to remove the students from their rooms. Teachers frequently sent students to the hallway or to another teacher's room instead of using the refocus activity inside their own classroom or referring the student to the office. Many claimed this practice was the real reason why office referral numbers went down, not because the behavior of the students had improved. This event also magnified the sense of distrust from the teachers towards the principal.

Although teachers and staff members clearly did not like being called out publicly by the principal, both teachers and students described incidents when they called students out publicly for their behavior. Some students shared their teacher spoke to them privately when being disciplined, but a more common response was that teachers often spoke to them in front of their peers when they made a mistake. This contradiction indicates another underlying assumption: It is not acceptable for adults to be reprimanded publicly, but it is acceptable for students.

Teachers and staff members also indicated they often spoke to students publicly instead of taking the time to have a private conversation. They knew they were supposed to have the conversations in a private manner, but felt those conversations took too much class time and public admonishment often earned them quicker results. One teacher even said, "We use buddy rooms and that's more effective because they are embarrassed to go in there." This teacher <u>wanted</u> the students to be embarrassed publicly, feeling it made a greater impact.

The librarian came up numerous times by students regarding her rude and disrespectful behavior towards them. For many students, going to the library was the most unpleasant part of school because they were concerned with how they and others would be treated while there. In Noddings (2005) theory of educational caring, she refers to a state of "engrossment" when the one-caring focuses completely on the needs of the cared-for. This means the one-caring should take on the feelings and needs of the cared-for in order to feel what he is feeling. When the teachers at Shelley Elementary reprimand their students publicly and set out to embarrass them on purpose, they are not engaging in a caring relationship as defined by Noddings. They themselves were humiliated when they were called out publicly by the principal in front of their peers, yet they did the same thing to their students on a regular basis.

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Different philosophies regarding the purpose of discipline. The principal believed discipline was a learning opportunity and considered individual student needs, but teachers wanted to see a punitive consequence delivered each time a student was sent to the office. Ms. Thomas believed that teaching students about behaving appropriately did not always go hand in hand with assigning punishments for misbehavior. She felt a student's background should be considered when dealing with behaviors and that each student's needs should be addressed individually. By attempting to treat each student individually and take background information into account, Ms. Thomas was exhibiting what Noddings (2005) would refer to as *confirmation*. This means that Ms. Thomas tried to see the best in the students, even when they had made a poor behavioral choice. She considered what may have motivated such actions and tried to use those ideas when she spoke with the students one-on-one. One component of the Give 'em Five framework asks teachers to insert a statement confirming the teacher still recognizes the good in that student. When Ms. Thomas was able to use a complete Give 'em Five conversation during discipline events and take the student's individual needs and background into account, she was engaging in three of the four critical components (modeling, dialogue, and confirmation) to create a caring environment for students and fostering a caring relationship with them (Noddings, 2005). Unfortunately, Ms. Thomas was unable to engage in this type of caring each time she interacted with a student about a behavioral issues. She had difficulty carrying out the values she stated through her actions, just as the teachers did.

The teachers and staff members wanted more consequences and greater punishments to be handed out by the principal when students were sent to the office. Many saw consequences as being, at the very least, directly linked to punishment. Some indicated through their statements they believed consequences and punishment were the same thing. Logical consequences for a

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misbehavior which did not necessarily include a punishing component were not considered to be adequate payment for a student's misdeed according to the teachers. Several mentioned wanting a very cut and dried system of consequences where a particular action automatically resulted in a set punishment. They were unwilling to consider the student's background or needs as Ms. Thomas did when she gave students consequences for their behaviors. This disconnect led to the teachers not trusting Ms. Thomas to handle the situation "effectively" before sending the student back to class. Many staff members made comments such as, "Nothing is gonna get done," when asked why they do not send more students to the office. This lack of trust with follow-through and expected consequences on the part of the teachers also contributed to the teachers' desire to handle behavioral events on their own.

The ESD program was misunderstood by most staff members leading to widespread misuse or non-use. Although most of the staff members received the same training during the summer of 2008, varied interpretations of the training led to ineffective use of the program. When teachers did not experience initial success using the program, either through misuse or fear of sending referrals to the office, they reverted back to what they were comfortable with which had proven to be more successful for them. Some of the teachers created a hybrid of ESD and their current discipline practices to make it work. They would tell others they were using ESD when, in fact, they were only using the bits and pieces that felt comfortable to them.

The principal and teachers attribute a more positive climate overall to the training for ESD and the programs' basic tenets. Although ESD was not successfully implemented at Shelley Elementary School, it did have a small positive impact on the overall culture of the school. The principal and teachers agreed that they think more about how they speak to students. Several reflected on things they would have said prior to the training, and what they say to

students now. Many admitted they do not use ESD as often as they should, but credit the program with improving how students are treated throughout school. One long-time staff member said that she saw a significant difference between before ESD and after. She indicated that she often witnessed things that were "scary," but now felt confident those events would be difficult to find in the school.

Implications

Using the theoretical framework of Schein's (Schein, 2004) theory of organizational culture leads to the understanding that a positive discipline program will not become embedded in an organization's deepest levels if the value of such a program is not already embedded there. School staff members can *say* they value treating students respectfully during discipline events, but their actions will continue to contradict this statement unless the stated values have become the norm for how that school does business unconsciously every day. In order for the stated values to be transformed into a permanent part of the underlying culture, staff members will have to experience repeated success with the use of the adopted program (Schein, 2004). This transformation from espoused values and beliefs to basic underlying assumptions can only occur if the school develops a collaborative and learning driven culture, teachers and administrators share a high level of trust between them, and leadership of the building is organized around a distributed leadership model.

A Collaborative Culture is Critical to Successful Implementation

In order for a program to be successfully implemented, a school must establish and nurture a culture which encourages collaboration amongst teacher and focuses on results (Fullan, 1995). There should be time set aside for ongoing training and open dialogue so teachers can make sense of the initiative and problem solve through issues which arise in their classrooms

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during implementation. There is frequently an "implementation dip" during the beginning stages of any implementation and things will often go wrong (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Teachers need to discuss these problems in order to find solutions for challenges presented by the new program. A collaborative culture provides the opportunity for teachers to interact and communicate with each other about the reform, which helps the reform initiative become a genuine part of everyday life in classrooms (Desimone, 2002). Although some teachers may initially seem to "resist" a new initiative, this resistance could be indicative of real problems of implementation such as lack of skill, lack of resources, or vague objectives (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Professional conversations can determine what is happening for these teachers and suggest solutions to ease their frustration or fear.

Reform literature also indicates that teachers often change reforms as much as the reform changes them (Cuban, 1998, p. 454). This ability to put their personal stamp on an initiative should not be seen as resistance, but rather a natural occurrence when significant change takes place. Professional discussions held in collaborative groups allow teachers to discuss these changes to determine if the changes take the reform initiative too far away from the original vision for the reform prior to adoption (Fullan & Miles, 1992). A climate that encourages teachers to take risks and try new strategies, supports reform efforts. Teachers will not attempt new initiatives or try new techniques if there is no acknowledgment or appreciation by others that problems encountered along the way are an expected part of the learning process. Professional learning communities allow teachers to experiment with an initiative without fear of reprimand or embarrassment.

The Teachers and Administrator Must Share a High Level of Trust

A professional learning community cannot thrive if the level of trust held between teachers and the administrator is low. The risk-free environment described above has no chance of coming to fruition if teachers believe the administrator is going to say one thing and then do another or reprimand them for mistakes or initial failure. A healthy environment also cannot exist if teachers do not trust each other. Reform literature indicates a trusting relationship among all stakeholders in a school setting encourages teachers to be more loyal to the school and to attempt new teaching methods (Desimone, 2002). Trust cannot be established quickly, but instead, develops over time through positive day-to-day interactions. When staff members and the administrator follow through with what they say they are going to do, their actions validate trust with others and confirm their personal integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, pp. 44-45). Principals must acknowledge the vulnerability of their staff when attempting to implement a new reform initiative. They should actively listen to teacher concerns and support them with possible solutions and resources. Trust will continue to be nurtured between the principal and staff members when the principal begins to share leadership decisions and responsibilities and communicates their important role in this process.

Leadership of the Building Should be Distributed Among Many

Implementing any reform is difficult and complex work and requires a great deal of time (Cuban, 1984; Fullan, 1995). Many principals have attempted to share leadership with staff members by engaging a leadership "team" of chosen teachers to assist the principal in guiding the work of the staff towards the school's vision. Oftentimes, these teacher teams were the only ones to help create that vision at the cost of not involving all other staff members in this important task. True shared leadership involves the entire staff by empowering them to identify

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problems within the school and creatively problem-solve ways to address the issue (Datnow, 2000). In an intensified leadership model, leadership reaches a new level by engaging many organizational members to participate in collaborative dialogue about current issues, practices, successes, and challenges throughout the school (Kruse & Louis, 2009). This type of leadership abandons the traditional hierarchical arrangement of vertical authority and distributes decision making and responsibilities among many stakeholders in the organization. These stakeholders all contribute expertise to the collaborative culture and hold each other accountable for the "collective responsibility" of combining the vision of the school with smaller daily leadership tasks. In this model, the principal is no longer the only one held accountable for the success or failure of the organization since all participants share this responsibility.

Another benefit resulting from this type of shared leadership is that teacher buy-in for an initiative becomes greater since they have first-hand experience in discussing and deciding ways to handle the challenges of the school. Reform literature points out that teachers often are not part of the decision-making process that selects the reform initiatives to be implemented in their school (Datnow, 2000), and their omission from the process contributes to the failure of the reform. This disconnect can immediately doom an initiative to failure since the teachers do not fully understand how the reform will help their students or even why the reform was chosen in the first place. Even if districts are the ones who choose a reform for system-wide implementation, collaborative communities and distributed leadership models allow the teachers to hold healthy conversations about the reform and support each other throughout its implementation.

Although distributed leadership is essential to successful reform implementation, a school leader remains vital to that success as well. Effective reform leaders understand the culture of

their school and have a vision for implementing change over time. They know how to enhance and bring out the expertise and skills of the people within the school and can use these skills to create a common culture of expectations (Elmore, 2000). Change requires there be someone available to manage it and encourage others who are wrapped up in the change process as well (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

For school reform initiatives to be successful, it is not sufficient to have collaborative professional learning communities. It is not sufficient to have effective leaders who understand and can manage the change process. Successful reform requires that effective, learning-oriented leadership be connected with collaborative professional communities in order to affect real change at the deepest cultural levels of an organization (Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008).

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APPENDIXES

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Adult Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of a positive discipline program and its effect on school culture at Shelley Elementary School. I am conducting this study for my doctoral dissertation research for the Wichita State University Educational Leadership program. I am a past administrator in Cypress School District and am currently the Head of Lower School at Wichita Collegiate School. I hope to learn how staff members at Shelley Elementary School implement a positive discipline program, to elicit teacher, administrator, and student perceptions of the program, and to see what impact this program has on the teacher/student relationship and culture of the school, if any. Approximately 40-50 individuals are expected to participate in this study. Five focus groups will be conducted. Three groups will consist of 8-10 staff members each who currently use the positive discipline program as part of fulfilling their duties at the school. The last two focus groups will consist of 8-10 students each. Some of these students will have attended Shelley Elementary School since before the positive discipline program was put into place three years ago. Others will be selected due to their experience with the use of the Effective School Discipline program.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement in the initial implementation and/or daily use of the positive discipline program at your school. If you decide to participate, you will be participating in one focus group, possibly a follow-up interview, and classroom observations.

The focus group will take approximately 45-60 minutes, and will be conducted at Shelley Elementary school at an agreed upon time that is convenient for those involved. With permission, the focus group will be audio recorded so an accurate transcript of the group conversation can be created. This will allow for careful examination of responses. Only the researcher and dissertation advisor will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Interviews will occur with approximately 3-5 staff members and 3-5 students. Interview participants will be chosen following the focus groups in order to gain deeper understanding of individual perspectives from some participants. Interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes each and will occur at Shelley Elementary at an agreed upon time that is convenient for each participant.

Classroom observations will occur over at least a two month period. Observation sessions will be approximately 60 minutes in length and may increase in both length of time and frequency as the study progresses. Notes will be taken during observations and transcribed to allow for careful analysis at a later time. All transcripts and field notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study and your identity will be protected at all times.

You are invited to be open in your responses. This openness might make you feel vulnerable during the study. To minimize these feelings, any identifiable information will be removed from all transcripts and your participation in the study will be kept confidential. Your

identity as a participant of this study will only be disclosed with your permission. Upon the conclusion of this study, a final report will be presented to the leadership team of Shelley Elementary. I also plan to share the results of this study through presentations at professional conferences and through publication in scholarly journals. This will allow others interested in this topic to benefit from the knowledge gained during this study. Be assured all identifiable information will be removed from any publication and presentation materials.

If you participate, you may benefit from a deeper understanding of how the implementation of a positive discipline program affects school culture. You will have an opportunity to share your views regarding the program, its implementation at Shelley Elementary, and its effect on school culture.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will <u>not</u> affect your future relations with Wichita State University, Shelley Elementary School, or Cypress School District. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact me at: Heather Eubank, 139 N. Ridgewood, Wichita, KS, 67208, by phone at 316-734-9694, or by e-mail at hreubank@gmail.com. You are also free to contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jean Patterson. She can be reached at: Educational Leadership, 1845 Fairmount, Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142, by phone at 316-978-3325, or by e-mail at jean.patterson@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, or by phone at 316-978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates you

have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate.

Please keep a copy of this consent form.

I agree to participate in the following activities for the Shelley Elementary positive discipline and

school culture study:

_____ Focus Group (with 8-10 people)

_____ Individual Interview (if requested by the researcher)

_____ _____

Signature of Subject   Date

Department of Educational Leadership
Campus Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142

Parent Consent Form for a Minor Child

Your child is invited to participate in a study of a positive discipline program and its effect on Shelley Elementary School. I am conducting this study for my doctoral dissertation research for the Wichita State University Educational Leadership program. I am a past administrator in Cypress School District and am currently the Head of Lower School at Wichita Collegiate School. I hope to learn how staff members at Shelley Elementary School implement a positive discipline program, to elicit teacher, administrator, and student perceptions of the program, and to see what impact this program has on the teacher/student relationship and on the overall school, if any.

Approximately 40-50 individuals are expected to participate in this study. Five focus groups will be conducted. Three groups will consist of 8-10 staff members each who currently use the Effective School Discipline program as part of fulfilling their duties at the school. The last two focus groups will consist of 8-10 students each. Some of these students will have attended Shelley Elementary since before the positive discipline program was put into place three years ago. Others will be selected due to their experience with the use of the Effective School Discipline program.

Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because of his/her involvement in the daily use of the positive discipline program at Shelley Elementary. The students are chosen based on their knowledge of the program. A request for participation <u>does</u>

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<u>not</u> indicate a discipline concern regarding your student. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he/she will be participating in one focus group, possibly one follow-up interview, and classroom observations.

The student focus group will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted at Shelley Elementary school at an agreed upon time that is convenient for those involved. With permission, the focus group will be audio recorded so an accurate transcript of the group conversation can be created. This will allow for careful examination of responses. Only the researcher and dissertation advisor will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Interviews will occur with approximately 3-5 staff members and 3-5 students. Interview participants will be chosen following the focus groups in order to gain deeper understanding of individual perspectives from some participants. Interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes each and will occur at Shelley Elementary at an agreed upon time that is convenient for each participant.

Classroom observations will occur over at least a two month period. Observation sessions will be approximately 60 minutes in length and may increase in both length of time and frequency as the study progresses. Notes will be taken during observations and transcribed to allow for careful analysis at a later time. All transcripts and field notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study and your child's identity will be protected at all times.

Your child is invited to be open in his or her responses. This openness might make them feel vulnerable during the study. To minimize these feelings, any identifiable information will be removed from all transcripts and participation in the study will be kept confidential. Your child's identity as a participant of this study will only be disclosed with your permission. Upon the

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conclusion of this study, a final report will be presented to the leadership team of Shelley Elementary. I also plan to share the results of this study through presentations at professional conferences and through publication in scholarly journals. This will allow others interested in this topic to benefit from the knowledge gained during this study. Be assured all identifiable information will be removed from any publication and presentation materials.

If your child participates, he/she may benefit from having the opportunity to share his/her opinion regarding the discipline program used at Shelley Elementary, and its effect on school culture.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect your family's future relations with Wichita State University, Shelley Elementary School, or Cypress School District. If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact me at: Heather Eubank, 139 N. Ridgewood, Wichita, KS, 67208, by phone at 316-734-9694, or by e-mail at hreubank@gmail.com. You are also free to contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jean Patterson. She can be reached at: Educational Leadership, 1845 Fairmount, Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142, by phone at 316-978-3325, or by e-mail at jean.patterson@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your child's rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, or by phone at 316-978-3285.

You are under no obligation to allow your child to participate in this study. Your

signature indicates you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided

to allow your child to participate.

Please keep a copy of this consent form.

I agree to allow my child to participate in the following activities for the Shelley Elementary

positive discipline and school culture study:

_____ Focus Group (with 8-10 people)

_____ Individual Interview (if requested by the researcher)

_____

Name of Child

_____   _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian   Date

Assent Form for a Minor

I have been told my parents (mom or dad) have said it is okay for me to participate, if I want to, in a project about the discipline program at Shelley Elementary School. I know I can stop at any time I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grade in any way.

_____   _____

Name   Date

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Focus Group Questions for Staff Members:

1. What do you believe to be critical components to an effective school-wide discipline program?

2. Describe how the Effective School Discipline (ESD) program works.

3. Why did your school choose to implement ESD?

4. How and when did you receive training for this program?

5. What do you like the best about the ESD program?

6. What is the biggest challenge in implementing this program?

7. Has the implementation of this program changed your relationship with students? With other staff? If so, how?

8. Has the implementation of this program changed the school? If so, in what ways?

9. Describe what this school was like prior to the implementation of ESD. What is the school like now?

10. Would you implement the ESD program again? Why or why not?

11. You've recently begun to receive training in the CHAMPS program. Describe CHAMPS.

12. Do you use both ESD and CHAMPS? If so, how/when do you use each program?

13. Do you use any other discipline programs?

14. Do you have anything else you would like to share regarding ESD or the school?

Focus Group Questions for Students

1. Describe the discipline or behavior system in your classroom.

2. Do other staff members in the school use the same system? If so, in what ways?

3. How do you feel when you are asked to "refocus" using the mats or other color cues?

4. How do you feel when a teacher comes to talk to you individually regarding a discipline situation?

5. Do you think the discipline program works? Why or why not?

6. Describe your relationship with your teacher and other staff members.

7. How do you feel when you're at school?

8. Think back to when you were in Kindergarten and 1st grade. Can you explain any differences in how the school is now compared to how it was then? Do you feel differently towards your teachers? Do you feel differently towards the school?

9. Is there anything more you would like to share with me regarding the discipline system here at school?

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions for the Principal and Lead Teacher

1. How long have you been at Shelley Elementary?

2. What made you decide to implement a positive discipline program?

3. What do you believe to be critical components of an effective school-wide discipline program?

4. Why did you choose to implement Effective School Discipline instead of another program?

5. How did you go about training your staff?

6. Are any follow-up trainings offered? If so, when and where?

7. Describe the first few months of implementation in regards to office referrals, staff confidence, student understanding, etc.

8. How is today's use of the program the same or different from the first year?

9. What affect has the use of ESD had on the teacher/student relationship, if any?

10. What affect has the use of ESD had on the your relationship with students, if any?

11. What affect has the use of ESD had on your relationship with other staff members, if any?

12. How is the school the same or different from before implementing ESD to now?

13. Would you implement ESD again if you had the choice? Why or why not?

14. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to the implementation of the Effective School Discipline program or your school?

Interview Questions for Staff Members

1. How long have you been at Shelley Elementary?

2. Were you part of the decision to implement a positive discipline program?

3. What do you believe to be critical components of an effective school-wide discipline program?

4. Describe the first few months of implementation in regards to office referrals, staff confidence, student understanding, etc.

5. How is today's use of the program the same or different from the first year?

6. What affect has the use of ESD had on the teacher/student relationship, if any?

7. What affect has the use of ESD had on your relationship with other staff members, if any?

8. How is the school the same or different from before implementing ESD to now?

9. Would you implement ESD again if you had the choice? Why or why not?

10. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to the implementation of the Effective School Discipline program or your school?

Interview Questions for Students

Interview questions with students will stem from their responses to the following questions during the focus group. The interview will allow the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the student's comments made during the group format.

1. Describe the discipline or behavior system in your classroom.

2. Do other staff members in the school use the same system? If so, in what ways?

3. How do you feel when you are asked to "refocus" using the mats or other color cues?

4. How do you feel when a teacher comes to talk to you individually regarding a discipline situation?

5. Do you think the discipline program works? Why or why not?

6. Describe your relationship with your teacher and other staff members.

7. How do you feel when you're at school?

8. Think back to when you were in Kindergarten and 1st grade. Can you explain any differences in how the school is now compared to how it was then? Do you feel differently towards your teachers? Do you feel differently towards the school?

9. Is there anything more you would like to share with me regarding the discipline system here at school?