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ABSTRACT

Outcomes of an inschool suspension program implemented at a New England elementary school are described in this practicum report. Because out-of-school suspension may place children at educational and physical risk, the inschool program was developed to reduce school absences, provide continuing instruction, and serve both rehabilitative and putative functions. Data were collected through a pilot teacher survey; interviews with staff, students, and parents; and document analysis of case referral reports, student records, and teachers' checklists of student behavior. Students who participated in the 4-month program had fewer absences, maintained their grades, and demonstrated greater insight into their behaviors. Although the project was judged to be a success, problems involved increased teacher workloads and an overrepresentation of minority students among those who were suspended. Funding for a part-time teacher/counselor is recommended. A copy of the teacher pilot survey in included in the appendix. (Contains 16 references.) (LMI)

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Developing an In-School Suspension Program
in an Elementary School as an Alternative
to Home-Bound Suspension.

by

Jerry Guindon

Cluster 43

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Jerry Guindon under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

March 25, 1992

Date of Final Approval of
Report

Polly Peterson Ph.D.

Polly Peterson, Ph. D., Adviser

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The writer wishes to acknowledge the school staff at the elementary school in which this implementation took place. The school principal, Mr. Joel Novitch, wholeheartedly gave this in-school suspension implementation full support despite the resultant staffing hardship it created. The program's success owes much to the school social worker, Mrs. Anita Potts, who tirelessly helped with the ISS room coverage and counseling, particularly in the absence of the writer. Many thanks also to those teachers who volunteered to staff the ISS room by donating their precious, limited time between their own classes. Finally, the writer owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Polly Peterson of Nova University without whose guidance this work would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Developing an In-School Suspension Program in an Elementary School as an Alternative to Home-Bound Suspension. Guindon, Jerry, 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Student Suspension/Elementary/Suspension Alternatives/School Misbehaviors/Discipline Policy/Counseling.

This practicum was developed to address the staff concerns at an elementary school of frequent out-of-school suspensions (OSS) resulting from misbehavior referrals to the principal's office. The staff felt that suspended students were often rewarded by OSS, at risk on the streets, interrupted in their schooling and that they often continued to be repeatedly suspended.

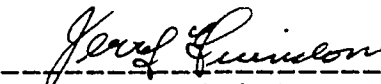
With the school principal's permission, the writer developed an in-school suspension program (ISS) which served as a better alternative to sending students home. ISS was more punitive, safer, more instructive and more rehabilitative.

Collected data over a four-month period reveal that the school principal suspended 24 students, 19 of whom were suspended in ISS where students were monitored and counseled daily. Reports from the principal, staff members and parents were positive. Despite the relative ease of OSS, compared with staffing and supervising the ISS room, the principal was so impressed with the fewer resultant referrals and teacher satisfaction that he fully supported the ISS when feasible. Teachers were happy knowing more effective disciplinary strategies were in place and parents liked ISS because their children were supervised at school in a learning environment. Moreover, the students' self-reports generally indicated they disliked the ISS. Most of them claimed they preferred being sent home where they would generally be unsupervised by their parents and not have to do any school work. Due to its success, ISS will continue in this school and be fully supported.

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February 27, 1992
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Jerry Guindon

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The writer works in two elementary schools located in a small New England city of approximately 29,000 residents. Historically, this city has been a center for trading and banking in the county. Its geographical location on Long Island Sound has made it into an important seaport for distribution of oil and various cargo to other areas of New England. The city has a military base which continues to operate and provide good employment to area residents. It also has a private junior and a private senior college within the city. The nearest State of Connecticut University is about 20 miles away.

The city's racial and ethnic population has changed much over the last 20 years. Made up mostly of Italian-Americans and Jews, the city began receiving Puerto Ricans and blacks from the South who were drawn to the area because of job availability and inexpensive housing. The current population is made up of approximately 55% blacks, 33% whites, and 12% Hispanics who are mostly Puerto Ricans. This shift in population has brought with it a great change in its cultural and socioeconomic climate. For the first

time, this small city has found itself as a microcosm of the larger urban areas. No longer is it the orderly, thriving seaport composed of a fairly homogeneous population. In recent years, as an example, it has been experiencing a rising crime rate fueled by the desperation of poor minority groups who risk everything to keep their families from starving. The presence of more drug dealings within the city, particularly, has put many of the youngsters at greater personal risk. Tax rates within the city have soared in recent years placing much financial burden upon the town to pay for the increases in unemployment, welfare and burgeoning educational costs.

The city has five elementary schools, one junior high school and one senior high school which are interspersed throughout the city. Due to low-income housing being built in certain districts of the city there is a large concentration of poor minorities situated there. Consequently, some elementary schools have had some overrepresentation of minorities in the past. As recently as last year, as an example, the city was forced by the State Department of Education to bus students to other schools in order to effect better racial balance. As a result, most schools in the city now have close to equal minority representation, although another elementary school which has a centralized Hispanic bilingual program may be a little overrepresented.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer functions as a school psychologist in two of the five elementary schools in this city. He provides psychoeducational evaluations and student counseling to those referred to him. Other duties include being a member of various committees, including Staff Development, Teacher Assistance and Planning and Placement Teams. Additionally, the writer conducts parenting groups with the help of a social worker.

One of the two elementary schools this writer targeted for this program has approximately 400 students with a racial-ethnic mix of 52% blacks, 38% whites and 10% Hispanics. This school is the newest of all the kindergarten to sixth grade elementary schools and is situated in the wealthiest section of the city. The school additionally houses a centralized educable mentally handicapped program, a birth to five preschool program, and a special needs kindergarten program which acts as a transition for the developmentally delayed.

The administration of this school has been proactive in its support of innovative programs. As an example, the principal agreed to begin a breakfast program at the school this past year as a pilot project which has found success. Knowing that so many students came to school hungry every day, he and his head teacher applied and received funding for this program. It has provided those children in need with breakfast at no cost if they met the poverty guidelines. Further, the school principal agreed to support a Curriculum-Based

Assessment program a few years ago which other schools had rejected. This program became an important aid to early intervention practice and the elimination of unwarranted referrals to special education. Interestingly, other schools have now adopted this program. Also, the principal is spearheading a program for mainstreaming kindergarten special needs students this fall with regular students where cooperative teaching will be instituted. This is in concert with the requirements of the least restrictive setting requirement of PL 94-142, the Education of the Handicapped Act.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Out-of-school suspension (OSS), which may be necessary for extreme behavioral problems, is additionally used for repeated minor offenses, often becomes rewarding to students, and interrupts their learning.

It is obviously very difficult for classroom teachers to be able to control physically and verbally abusive children within the confines of their classes while they are trying to deal with other complying students. These are the kinds of children that teachers confess losing sleep over and making them dread coming to work. When these children get out of hand, whole classes suffer. These acting out children become threats to the safety of others. Moreover, these children disrupt the learning process for others. The usual order found in these classes becomes chaotic. It is no wonder, therefore, that many teachers will seek the help of their principal for relief. Their primary responsibility, after all, is to the majority of their students so that they may be able to learn in a safe and orderly environment. They will thus feel justified in referring their

acting out students to the principal's office for appropriate disciplinary measures.

Teachers additionally refer students to the principal's office for repeated minor offenses. They feel their attempts at controlling them have failed and that their principal's impact will send those youngsters a strong message to discontinue their misbehaviors. These offenses generally encompass the range of misbehaviors from being repeatedly told to pay attention, to stop talking, to sit still, to complete assignments including homework, tardiness and absenteeism, to name a few.

Most of this school's teachers use a behavior modification plan which is often successful at warning students before more drastic supplementary actions are taken to deal with misbehaviors. As an example, unless the offense is grievous, a misbehaving child is initially warned. If his misbehavior continues, his or her name is posted on the blackboard as a further warning. Additional misbehaviors cause check marks next to the name. After two check marks, the student is then sent to the principal's office for discipline. This procedure is not uniformly used by all teachers, however. Some prefer to use other management devices such as ignoring, threatening and after-school detention.

There are different tolerance levels for misbehaviors among the teachers, moreover. Some teachers prefer to deal with their behavior problems within the classroom and seldom resort to using the principal for discipline. Others may have less than adequate pupil management skills and end up referring often. Understandably, a teacher may also have "inherited" a difficult group to manage.

The principal who receives these behavior referrals decides on a case-by-case basis the disciplinary outcome on the referred child. For the most part, he is judicious in his use of sending students home. He keeps many of his referrals sitting on a chair just outside his office for a specified amount of time, generally unsupervised, and with nothing to do. If the student is a repeat offender or was involved in some serious incident, the principal will take the option of calling the parents to come and pick up their youngster from school. OSS will take effect for part of a day to as much as ten school days. Anything longer would require a Planning and Placement Team meeting, as a longer term would be considered a change in educational placement.

While being sent home may become punitive to some children, there are many who find it rewarding. Some children may have intact families where one parent may be home to supervise, or may have to leave work to do it. In these cases the youngster being sent home is not likely to feel rewarded, especially if the parents dole out their own punishment. However, there are many single parent homes in this small urban area where children often stay at home by themselves. These latchkey children will generally have the run of the house in the absence of their working parent. They are free to watch television, play, and go out to ride their bicycles. Being suspended from school is not a deterrent to these students. They find it more enjoyable to be at home and play than to work at school.

Additionally, whenever a teacher sends a misbehaving child to the principal's office, learning is interrupted. If the student is only

sitting outside the principal's office, he or she will miss the lesson that is going on in class. Worse yet, when a student is suspended from school, there will be many lessons missed. For a student who throughout the year receives a number of suspensions, learning will have considerably deteriorated. Not being in class, therefore, can create some serious detriment to the misbehaving child's learning, and the more frequent the suspensions, the more the youngster will fall behind in classwork.

In brief, therefore, students at this elementary school need alternatives to OSS in order to instill more effective discipline and to provide some continuity in their learning. Otherwise, being suspended from school will continue to provide most of them with pleasurable activities while interrupting their education. What was intended to be punishing often turns out to be rewarding. In this light, OSS may serve as a reinforcer for those who wish to continue misbehaving thereby setting into motion the cycle of referral-suspension that so many students have come to embrace.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of this problem comes from the writer's personal observation, an interview with the school social worker, and data derived from a teacher survey.

The writer has personally been present when students were sent home for misbehaviors. There are many occasions the writer has witnessed where students were suspended from school from the

smallest to the largest block of time legally allowed. Recently, as an example, two students were suspended almost simultaneously from school. One student was sent home for three days for repeated class disruption and the other was suspended for ten days for pushing a teacher.

In discussing OSS with the school social worker, it became clear how difficult it is to acquire accurate data on true OSS cases. School procedure requires the notification of the suspension to the School Superintendent within 24 hours whenever a student is sent home for misbehaviors. There are some students, however, who are sent home only for the remaining part of a school day following an incident. This is usually not reported and does not become a statistic. It was difficult for this writer to obtain accurate OSS suspension data.

The writer decided to obtain teacher input regarding school suspensions. He designed a School Suspension Survey (see Appendix A). The survey was designed to elicit data and comments from all kindergarten to sixth grade teachers in this school. Questions were asked about the types of referrals made, the number of them that were sent to the principal's office, and the number sent home. Further, comments were sought regarding their feelings about OSS and any alternatives. Ten of the 14 regular classroom teachers responded to this survey and provided data and comments. Results tabulated from this suspension survey show that 49 students had been sent to the principal's office during the year. The principal routinely chastises the referred youngsters for their misbehaviors. Corporal punishment is never used. Twenty-three of those

disciplinary referrals had been sent home. The rest had been kept sitting idly on a chair near the principal's office for a stipulated amount of time. The length of suspensions varied from partial days to the maximum of 10 days, and some children received multiple home-bound suspensions during the year. Some teachers admitted not being too sure on the numbers provided as they had not kept a record themselves. All teachers with the exception of one felt that OSS is not an effective disciplinary tool; many children are not deterred by after-school detention and they would like to see alternatives like in-school suspension be available in its place.

Causative Analysis

The writer views a number of causes that appear to justify to the school administration the reason for employing OSS as a disciplinary measure in this elementary school. They generally fall under the categories of inadequate pupil management, inadequate referral guidelines, expediency, the sometimes faulty concept of OSS being always punitive and the lack of alternative resources.

As an example, it is clear from the suspension survey that a few teachers sent more behavior referrals to the principal over this past year than most others. This could be interpreted that these particular teachers had more difficult students with which to deal in their classes compared to others. However, there is a strong likelihood that these teachers additionally lacked behavioral management skills in dealing with their problem students. For instance, none of these teachers with high referral rates used the

school's standard behavior management technique which includes writing the student's name on the blackboard following the second offense. Moreover, these teachers may have a low frustration tolerance and lack the skills for using in-class timeout to allow a "cooling off" period. They may additionally view the principal as the main school disciplinarian with the authority and power to create enough impact to correct their misbehaving students.

As teachers have the freedom within the purview of their respective classes to employ their own management strategies, they also appear to be inconsistently referring students to the principal's office. As mentioned earlier, some teachers do not utilize good management techniques. Consequently, without specific management guidelines from which to refer, some teachers haphazardly refer when they could manage the youngsters themselves. Therefore, the school principal may frequently receive behavior referrals that could have been handled within the classroom. Many of these referrals could have been prevented if there were good behavioral referral guidelines developed by the principal and enforced consistently.

Another cause for the use of OSS springs from the perceived need for the removal of the misbehaving youngster from the class and from the school. It is very expedient to be rid of a disruptive youngster who disturbs the normally smooth functioning of a class. Teachers who do so feel that they are able to restore order and continue teaching in an optimal setting. The principal, in turn, may additionally feel that sending home a habitually referred student will get rid of the "pest" and will allow him the opportunity to have

the parents punish the transgressor. In this vein, he may get on with the myriad duties that befall him as principal without having to continuously check on that student's behavior and whereabouts while he is sitting outside his office generally unsupervised.

Moreover, the school principal may come to truly believe that OSS is truly punitive for most students when, in fact, it may be rewarding to many. By calling in parents to pick up their misbehaving children who are sent home, he may get the general message that corrective action on the parents' part will take place, and that future misbehaviors will be stopped. This now shifts the disciplinary burden back to the parents, and the administrator may feel relief at the cooperation and additional help received. However, this principal is not naive. He knows that some of these suspended students sometimes end up on the very same school playgrounds, playing on the swings, while the other students are hard at work in their classroom. He has chased them away from the school playground on several occasions. The concept of OSS as being solely punitive bears little reality. This is particularly true when it is considered, that in single parent homes which dominate family life so much of this city, these children may enjoy their suspension time at home and in the streets, much of it unsupervised.

The school appears to use very few alternatives to OSS in dealing with major school behavior problems. Some teachers do use timeout within their class, and sometimes they have a misbehaving child sit in the hall outside of class for minor offenses. Behavior modification is practiced by some teachers as already mentioned.

But when a teacher feels that after trying some strategies, he or she still has lost control, the child may be remanded to an after-school detention room. Although there are some die-hard students who claim they do not care, this strategy is sometimes helpful as most children do not like detention. They want to go home when school is out. Its effect at this point appears to be temporary. Most of the youngsters who end up in detention are also frequent repeaters, while, as mentioned, it has no impact on the other intransigent students. Unfortunately, many students are bused into this school from distant parts of the city and teachers know that detention cannot be used as they cannot miss their bus transportation. Moreover, most of these same children habitually get referred to the principal and end up being sent home because of the lack of any alternative that could deal with them more effectively.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A search of the literature on out-of-school suspension (OSS) in schools reveals its uses and abuses. This review attempts to examine OSS and its historical basis, legislative impact, other reasons for its use, the types of behaviors represented, the overrepresentation of minorities, and the risks associated with its continued full use.

Out-of-school suspension appears to be a universally applied strategy for dealing with behavioral problems in many schools throughout the United States. The literature shows that OSS is very

seldom done at the elementary school level; nearly always the middle and senior high schools have been impacted with its practice. Elementary schools have traditionally always been able to deal with their younger students' relatively minor misbehaviors within the confines of their walls. With few exceptions, they found little need to send children home. This writer feels, however, that there appears to be a downward extension of serious misbehaviors usually found mostly in the upper grades that have now been becoming more common at the elementary level. This has created pressures upon elementary school level administrators to use suspensions, heretofore more of a secondary school strategy, as a way of trying to deal with their misbehaving children and youth.

Discipline is becoming alarmingly more of a problem in schools nationally according to Collins (1985) who cites a study that shows educators and parents consider it a number one priority in our country's schools. Moreover, DiSciullo (1984) quotes a Gallup Poll taken in 1982 which listed inadequate discipline as the public's main school concern. Collins reports that there was a more uncivilized model which existed during colonial times which consisted primarily of the use of harsh corporal punishment. Children were seen as basically undisciplined creatures who, not unlike the training of animals, were in need of physically controlling measures that would instill upon them the importance of behaving correctly. Although Collins acknowledges that some of these primitive methods are still in use in a few states today, more humanistic changes have taken place. However, on the heels of this reform, school administrators still felt that those who continued to

misbehave should be sent home and have their parents deal with them. Collins feels that sometimes this was about the only penalty ever used for class disruption and other misbehaviors as corporal punishment had been banned in most states.

About the time of landmark legislation, such as PL 94-142, the Education for the Handicapped Act, which provided for the provision and guarantee of an appropriate as well as a free education for all, judicial acts soon followed supporting students' rights. Center and McKittrick (1987), as an example, cite the lack of due process procedures to a student which became challenged in the case of *Wood vs. Strickland* (95 S. Ct. 725, 1975). Administrators then began to take more seriously the legal issues involved in disciplinary actions taken along with a better awareness of students' legal rights. Further, Rothstein (1990) reports that disciplinary measures involving excessive suspension and expulsion were additionally challenged through a Supreme Court decision in *Goss vs. Lopez*, (95 S. Ct. 726, 1975), which voted in favor of the student. The issue at stake was the lack of procedural protection for a student in dealing with expulsion and suspension issues. Many schools, as a result, became more cautious about extended home suspensions. According to Center and McKittrick (1987), the maximum ten consecutive school days maximum suspension originated then. Patterson (1985) states that administrators have often viewed their authority to suspend students as a "safety valve" for the maintenance of school order. They now feel restricted by judicial and legislative acts in the requirement to curb the length of suspensions.

There appears to be little change in the types of discipline used over the years by administrators. Johnson (1979) studied school suspension programs in Missouri and found that OSS was the most popular choice among school principals. He states that statistics indicate that as many as 20,000 children were suspended in New York City, 9,000 in Houston and 11,000 in Cleveland in 1972. Johnson states that most of these children found themselves in problem situations outside the school which put them at much greater disadvantage than if they had been allowed to remain in school to somehow work out their problems. There are many hazards on various city streets that place suspended students under high risk of unhealthy influence and physical injury, particularly with absent, working parents. No longer do they have the safety net of caring educators with which to protect them when they are temporarily ejected from their educational environment.

The major reasons students are suspended are cited by Johnson (1979) who lists as many as 14 reasons schools typically use to suspend students. These include smoking, lethal weapons, obscenity, threats, forgery, drugs and alcohol use and others. Stessman (1985) further points out the irrationality of suspending students from school for reasons of being absent from school. Moreover, Radin (1988) calls it "self-contradictory" (p.479) to remove these children from school for additional time for not being there in the first place! In this writer's view, it's like giving candy to youngsters as punishment for taking candy when they were not supposed to have any.

In some ways, OSS is indeed just like giving candy to many youngsters. Johnson (1979) cites that research studies done on OSS students not only indicate the lack purpose in its use, its limitation in changing the offending behavior, but, importantly, how it is viewed as a reward by so many students. Patterson (1985) additionally comments that suspensions for so many of these youngsters is like being "awarded a vacation" (p.97) as punishment. She states that rewarding them in this fashion makes it even harder for the returning suspended students. They find themselves unable to keep up with their studies because of the lessons missed. Many will continue their misbehaviors and get sent home because they find it rewarding, and this becomes their way of coping with poor grades.

Additional research, according to Johnson (1979), points out that there is some consistency in the type of socioeconomic background and racial status of most of the students who are suspended out of schools. As an example, he states children on welfare, or who come from females heads of households, or who are black, are given more frequent suspensions and for longer durations. Further, Grice (1986) remarks that an important concern found in his study of the Portland, Oregon schools' suspension rates was that minorities were targeted in higher frequencies than whites. Radin (1988) also states that OSS is very discriminatory as he cites one study which claims that black children are twice as likely to be on home-bound suspension as whites. Interestingly, he additionally points out that in two Michigan schools that were fully integrated, one of the schools reported 32% of their black students were suspended, while the other school reported as many as 60% blacks

were suspended in the same year. During the previous year both schools reported suspension figures of only 15% and 38%, respectively. These data raise not only the concern for discriminatory practices in school suspensions, but also the lack of uniformity in suspension policies across school districts and the country as a whole.

At issue with the overrepresentation of minorities in school suspension cases is what Radin (1988, p. 479) calls the "mismatch between the middle-class expectations of the school and the cultural norms of subgroups". He stresses that those students who don't care about being in school, who are not college-bound, as an example, find schools generally a "boring" place to be. It is no wonder that these students view their educational experience as inconsequential in that they do not perceive any relevance in connection with their own ethnic or cultural world. If learning is not their proper focus, they are bound to misbehave in some fashion and perhaps seek to be released to the streets.

Suspending students out of schools additionally impacts negatively on educational progress. Radin (1988) stresses in her report that, while "children and their problems are pushed into the streets" (p. 478) during OSS, they are missing much instruction. The great educational risk resulting from this disciplinary approach alone warrants a look at alternative strategies that would not be so counterproductive. Grice (1986) adds that OSS often creates a learning regression in suspended students. This implies that not only does OSS curtail the continuation of present instruction but that it additionally affects poorly some prior learning. It is difficult to

remember the algorithms of last week's algebra lesson, or remember Grant's role in the Civil War, if the student does not have the benefit of day-to-day lessons for the uninterrupted continuation of learning. Continuity is imperative as an educational strategy for optimal learning. Grice implies that these youngsters find themselves sometimes far behind when they return to school. He feels that many become so discouraged that they become truant and eventually drop out of school.

Alternatives to OSS which employ keeping students in-house have become popular in recent years but have been fraught with problems. Mendez and Sanders (1981), as an example, find that these alternatives are not the "panacea or Pandora's box" (p.65) schools thought they would be. They found that school attendance did not improve, reduce recidivism nor improve graduation rates because misbehaving students were not sent home suspended. Importantly, they found that the schools tended to use inappropriate strategies in disciplining these students. As an example, little attempt was made to reach them through counseling or to offer continuing instruction.

Hockman and Worner (1987) also felt that simply dropping an OSS program without adding some constructive plan to rehabilitate offending students would simply not be enough. In their review of the Newport News "Beat It!" program, they found that while keeping the offending youngsters in school was preferable to OSS, counseling was deemed to be a necessary component. They stress, as an example, that when students are not counseled in-house following their transgressions, they become 15 times more likely to be

referred to the principal again, and 13 times more likely to be suspended once again.

In summary, the literature stresses that the use of OSS is fraught with problems and that elementary school administrators need to review their present disciplinary policies to use OSS only for the most grievous offenses. The literature strongly supports the use of alternatives to OSS as long as they can be rehabilitative, educational and punitive. Although schools have come a long way from the more primitive "caning" days of yesteryear, if youngsters are simply dumped into the streets as a measure of instilling punishment, all of society loses. OSS has been meted out mostly on minority groups, according to the cited literature, thereby widening even more racial alienation by the messages they receive from this practice. The literature stresses over and over again, moreover, that OSS may be rewarding to so many, and inappropriate to so many others. As an example, why would an administrator want to suspend a youngster who is truant? The writer agrees with the literature that better alternatives need to be found that will provide a punitive approach, yet attempt to maintain instruction and reduce recidivism.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The writer's goal for this elementary school is to develop an alternative to the present out-of-school suspension discipline plan which will decrease resultant school absences, provide continuing instruction, become rehabilitative yet remain punitive.

Expected Outcomes

- 1) It is expected that students will not miss as many days of school due to misbehaviors.
- 2) Students will not fall behind in their learning.
- 3) Students will have greater insight into their misbehaviors.
- 4) Students will feel punished.
- 5) The school staff and parents will find the new plan more effective and support it.

Measurement of Outcomes

An accurate daily log was kept of all case referrals that the principal acted upon to recommend suspensions. Data which listed the specific teacher complaint, the date and time of occurrence, and the number of partial days or full days spent in OSS was included. Additionally, information in the form of demographics of referred students and their families was added which included socioeconomic status, intactness and size of family, racial or ethnic status, and family employment history. Moreover, any other pertinent information was added if found germane and available to the writer. As an example, medical, psychological and special education histories were listed as important information sources if considered important to etiological considerations in the misbehaviors elicited by students. Data collection, therefore, was felt to be an important aspect of the plan in order to accurately track all referred cases and apply successful alternate suspension strategies. A comparison was made from the log to determine any changes in the OSS suspension rates.

A review of class grades of referred students supplied by classroom teachers helped determine whether the alternative strategy is working in maintaining instruction during the program. It was inferred that if the referred students were able to keep up with their class assignments and show no loss in grade averages that their learning was fairly continuous.

Teachers filled out a behavioral checklist at the beginning and again at the end of the alternative intervention in order to help gauge behavioral insight. A comparison of behaviors was made from the teacher checklist before and after the intervention to help determine program efficacy. Moreover, less recidivism on a particular student was additionally strongly suggested to be improved self-management. Verbal reactions to the alternative program was additionally sought from the teachers.

Student interviews helped determine how punitive the alternative program was viewed compared to OSS and that data were compiled. Reduced recidivism was additionally perceived as the program's more punitive approach along with its rehabilitative effect.

Staff and parent interviews were solicited by the writer and the principal to help determine their views on the merit of the alternative disciplinary program.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Out-of-school suspension (OSS) is often used at this elementary school for repeated minor offenses because of a lack of a viable alternative. OSS is often found to be rewarding to students, interruptive of learning and non-rehabilitative.

The literature strongly suggests that suspending youngsters from school as a disciplinary measure for misbehaving is counterproductive, and that alternatives, such as in-school suspension, work best. There are words of caution, however, about the successful implementation of in-school suspension without the provision of educational and emotional support. Most of the literature is fully supportive of ISS as long as measures are taken to ensure that counseling be provided, education be continued, parents become involved, ISS philosophy be embraced, and that the school staff and parents are made part of the decision-making process.

While the literature reports on suspension programs with middle school and high school students, the writer feels that similar case scenarios can be envisioned for the elementary student.

It is felt that elementary school students mirror fairly closely upper grade student misbehaviors to a marked degree. Admittedly, the elementary school students' misbehaviors are usually not as extreme or as extensive as what adolescents experience, such as smoking, alcohol and drug usage, or carrying dangerous weapons to school. However, there are a host of adolescent types of misbehaviors that elementary schools find themselves dealing with more and more on a routine basis in recent times. It behooves the writer to consider, therefore, the use of similar approaches and solutions as appropriate for application to younger misbehaving students as well.

Isolating a disruptive student is of paramount importance when all other approaches fail the classroom teacher. She or he has the other students' educational welfare to consider above the temporary loss of the suspended student. As Collins (1985) states, removal of youngsters has historically been viewed as "expeditious" (p. 3) in that offending students are not around to disturb anyone in school following their suspensions. OSS achieved little else, however, as it became obvious, following annual national reports which showed staggering OSS numbers, that better solutions had to be found (Cuttle, 1975).

In-school suspension became the needed solution to many school districts. Collins (1985) states that ISS became a wanted alternative because it had the effect of maintaining children in school where help would be available for them. He claims that this help was viewed as improving family involvement with the school, accountability, and ultimately helping to curb the dropout rate.

DiSciullo (1984) also felt that the OSS program that was used at a middle and senior high school was not effective, and it forced their administration to look "reactively and proactively" (p. 329) at ISS as a solution. The concept utilized by the administrators was based on developing a in-school room that could be used to "isolate, instruct, and counsel the disruptive student" (p. 329). They used a self-contained classroom which was equipped with desks, lockers, and books. An ISS teacher was assigned to the room and she ensured that class assignments were done. Bathroom visitations were monitored closely. Lunch was brought in by an aide. Socialization with other students was minimized. A social questionnaire was filled out by each referred student in order to gain insight into the student's problems. Counseling was initially performed by the assistant principal, and later by the ISS teacher in small group sessions. The program was successful in that it showed a drop in disciplinary referrals by 48% and recidivism by 82%.

Short and Noblit (1985) looked at ten in-school suspension programs in North Carolina and found that only when a "therapeutic component" (p. 113) was added it became successful. While 9 out of 10 of the ISS programs they studied provided a minimal educational component they failed to provide counseling for their referred students. As a result, what was inferred as a beneficial program turned out to be no more than a placement with a more restrictive setting which added little to student behavioral improvement. However, Short and Noblit stress that the solution to providing a successful program lies in its ability to provide, not only a good continuing educational exposure, but adding counseling to improve

behavioral insights. The one school that offered this therapeutic element as part of its in-school suspension reduced its OSS figures of 160 from the previous year to only 1 OSS and 50 ISS in its first year of implementation.

Hockman and Worner (1987) also conclude from their review of the "Beat It!" program in Virginia that, while ISS is a better alternative to OSS, recidivism can only be effectively stopped when counseling becomes added to the program. They feel, as an example, that it is important to teach problem-solving skills to suspended students as a strategy for keeping them out of trouble. They claim that youngsters basically lack self-esteem and have poor self-awareness. Counseling, therefore, should focus on improving their view of themselves, getting them to accept themselves so that they may like themselves better, and developing good mental attitudes. They have found that when counseling is provided, truancy is reduced significantly, and along with better attendance comes improved grade point averages and better behavior.

Stessman (1985) examined an ISS program in Missouri which used a paraprofessional to proctor students in a self-contained classroom. He initially found that the in-house suspensions were nothing more than "holding tanks" (p. 87) as the suspended students received no rehabilitative help. The solution they found came in the form of providing students with information booklets that dealt with rule violations. If stealing was an issue with the suspended student, as an example, the counseling material was given to the youngster for reading. Written reports were often requested from the students to comment about their incident, and to suggest ways

that they could eliminate future misbehaviors. With this approach used, ISS showed a 25% decrease in recidivism and an overall 20% fewer ISS referrals.

Patterson (1985) stresses that, while in-school suspension does act as an important deterrent, the solution to preventing future misbehaviors lies in the provision of goal-directed counseling. She feels, as an example, that students' misbehaviors can generally be traced to a single cause. Often, she feels, that cause is related to the student's inability to function well in group situations. For this reason, she maintains that it is important to ensure that the ISS room rules require no student interaction to keep it from turning it "into a blackboard jungle" (p. 98). A student will then be able to develop more insights about his group behavior and open up more to his or her counselor. This approach creates a better therapeutic setting to enable positive behavioral change and help reduce recidivism.

Mendez and Sanders (1981), while recommending that ISS not become a "dumping ground" (p. 68) for teachers, feel that it should make a strong commitment to both emotional and educational rehabilitation. The solution to a successful ISS program first begins by having all staff members embrace its philosophical approach. This embodies the notion that suspended students should not be subject to be labeled derogatorily because of their misbehaviors. This sets them up for what may be inaccurate teacher expectation through faulty generalization. The authors feel that those misbehaving students most often need just a simple helping hand in the form of both educational and emotional support.

Sullivan (1989) stresses that parent involvement and counseling is a necessary component in the successful development of an in-school suspension program and adds that full-time, qualified staff is an important variable. She indicates that parent communication is necessary in the implementation of ISS and the continuous monitoring of the student's progress. She states that parents need to be involved from the outset of a suspension in order to inform them of the incident, to instruct them about the useful strategies they are attempting at school, and to open up communication lines for a cooperative undertaking. Sullivan also feels that counseling should be individualized as much as possible, using appropriate techniques, and by qualified individuals who know about the student's work.

Corbett (1981) emphasizes the need to involve the school staff at all levels for obtaining a successful ISS program. She feels that decision making policies which implement new programs, such as ISS, need to involve all concerned in the decision to institute such a program. She states that, although involving many individuals, such as teachers, parents and even students may be problematic in leading to mutually acceptable decisions, the effort is very worthwhile. Solutions to problems that are mutually resolved by a group tend most likely to be more wholeheartedly supported if there is a sharing in the decision-making. It becomes important, therefore, to enlist the support of the school staff and the parents of the school community and make them partners in the solution in trying to resolve the problems of out-of-school suspension. With the help of administrators giving informed suggestions, alternatives such as

in-school suspension can be suggested and hopefully agreed upon. The successful implementation of ISS will then be more assured.

Description of Selected Solution

This writer agrees with the literature cited about the ineffectiveness of out-of-school suspension as a disciplinary tool. In-school suspension shows much merit as an alternative. ISS is considered as a possible solution for dealing with the acting-out, disruptive child who must be removed from the classroom for the maintenance of order as long the program is supportive.

In order to have this ISS implementation become successful, the writer feels that it will be important to carefully plan a strategy that would enhance its feasibility while avoiding as many pitfalls as possible as suggested by the literature. As an example, communicating to the school staff and parents about the need for options to the present out-of-school suspension disciplinary policy is of great necessity. Further, adequate space will be needed for the referred students to be contained while in ISS, staffing of the ISS room will need to be accomplished, class work will need to be made available to the students, ISS rules will need to be developed, counseling will need to be made available and a careful accounting of referrals and possible behavioral changes will need to be made.

As an example, the school principal will be approached by the writer on using ISS as an alternative to OSS and to procure his full support for this new suspension policy. The school staff will

addressed at the first staff meeting of the year by both the principal and the writer. It is felt that informing the staff as early as possible in the new school year would be optimal for its expeditious implementation. Discussions and comments will be sought at the first teachers' meeting of the school year. At that time, OSS will be discussed at length, ideas about ISS as an alternative will be suggested and volunteers will be sought to help supervise a suspension room. Both the school principal and the writer will address the suspension alternatives to the staff in order to help with clarification and support.

The suspension room will be located across from the teachers' lounge, and it will need to be properly equipped. The room will need a blackboard, adequate lighting, and several school desks with study carrels. The desks will be arranged so as to minimize student interaction. Suspension room rules will be posted on one wall. Every effort will be undertaken to ensure that suspension within the school will be viewed by pupils and staff as punitive as possible in order to reduce recidivism. As an example, it is felt that by isolating students within the ISS room under supervision, thus restricting their school movement and access to ancillary programs, would discourage future misbehaviors.

The plan will include procuring enough teacher volunteers to help run the suspension room on a rotating basis. The writer and the school worker will be personally involved as volunteers and will be responsible for its management. The school principal will often drop by the room to help ensure its smooth operation and emphasize the seriousness of the students' placement.

Being an administrative judgment, the school principal has the sole authority over the suspension of all children and in deciding its term of duration. Therefore, only those students who have committed offenses of a serious nature would be considered for ISS. He also may need to use OSS according to his judgement, such as cases involving personal harm to others. Like OSS, ISS cannot exceed ten school days at any one time and will not be used unless a Planning and Placement Team meets and considers a change of placement.

When a student is remanded to the ISS, parents will be notified immediately by the principal and asked to come in for a conference as soon as practicable. The suspended youngster and the principal will be present at the meeting along with the writer and the school social worker. The incident will be discussed, and it is expected that the parents will cooperate and additionally utilize home discipline in order to emphasize the gravity of the offense.

Teachers will ensure that daily class assignments are sent to the ISS room to ensure as little break as possible from instruction. The ISS volunteer will be available to help clarify academic problems in ISS.

Counseling for the suspended student will be initiated immediately and be provided daily by the writer or the social worker. The incident will be discussed and strategies will be designed so as to prevent any future behavioral problems. Students will be taught problem-solving skills and be asked to model appropriate behaviors while in counseling. The amount of counseling

time will vary according to the individual and the presenting problem. The writer will ensure that follow-up contacts with the teacher be made, and that additional counseling sessions be provided out of ISS if deemed necessary. It is expected that additional classroom strategies will be used with students who exhibit severe problems and who show recidivism. Depending on the problem, these youngsters may be given more responsible leadership roles within their regular class, preferential seating may take place, and any other behavior management devices deemed appropriate will be used.

The referred students will remain within the confines of the suspension room for the entire duration of their suspensions. The students will report there daily and begin immediately on their class assignments. The students will be escorted to the bathroom or for drinks as needed. Lunch will be brought to the ISS and will be eaten only there. The students will not associate with other students, and they will not attend gym, music or art during their suspension stay.

Report of Action Taken

Action on this plan first began when the writer received teacher input the previous school year based on a Teacher Suspension Survey (See Appendix A) which indicated some overwhelming dissatisfaction with disciplinary referrals that often ended up in OSS.

Two days before the beginning of school year, 1991-1992, the school principal and the writer addressed the first teacher staff

meeting of the year where, along with other items on the agenda, the issue of OSS was brought up, its limitations outlined as an unsuccessful form of discipline and alternatives were discussed. Some of the teachers brought up the subject of in-school suspension as a possible solution. The writer stressed at the meeting that ISS can be a viable alternative to OSS. He discussed his literature search on the subject and mentioned the success of ISS when used appropriately. He asked the principal and the staff to consider and support an in-school suspension program as a viable alternative to OSS during this school year. Input from the teachers was positive as it made them feel as partners in the decision-making process.

However, when teachers were asked if they would volunteer to help manage the suspension room, there were few raised hands. Their reaction was fairly predictable realizing how little time teachers have to themselves during their busy school day, and knowing that they already volunteer for after-school detention duty. Nevertheless, it was agreed to begin implementation as soon as it could be feasible, and an attempt would be made to staff the ISS room as best as possible.

At the first PTO meeting of the year, the principal announced the new ISS suspension policy to the parents and it was enthusiastically received and perceived as a needed change and a relief for them.

With the principal's approval, the writer set up a small classroom across from the teacher's lounge and equipped it with several desks. The desks were arranged to minimize student interaction. A blackboard was made available. A sign listing ISS

rules was designed by the writer and posted on one of the walls. The rules stipulated that silence was required, assignments must be worked on and finished, and, if finished early, to read a book. Further, no one could leave the ISS room without permission. Lavatory visits would be escorted, lunch brought in, and that the referred students would not be allowed to go to gym, art, music or recess. Teachers were told that they would be responsible for their referred students' daily class work, and they would be required to send in daily assignments to them. They were told the purpose of ISS was to provide a punitive yet instructional setting. With everything in place, the school began the year with positive anticipation for a fresh alternative plan to the out-of-school suspension disciplinary policy that has put so many of these youngsters at risk personally, emotionally and educationally.

An ISS log was developed and cases began to be written in on October 1, 1991, which showed all case referrals and pertinent information. The reason for the referral was listed, the time suspended, and all student demographics including name, age, grade, parental and sibling information, sex, race, intactness of family and contact telephone was added.

Whenever a student was sent to the ISS room, the writer would sit down with the student and go over the suspension rules of working on his or her class assignments, and remaining secluded within the confines of the room. Immediate counseling would take place. The focus of counseling was specific to the referring complaint. As an example, if the youngster had been referred because of oppositional behavior, strategies were worked out with the

student to discourage future inappropriate encounters. If fighting was the issue, the referred student was asked about what steps could be taken to avoid this confrontation in the future. Various eclectic counseling techniques were utilized to fit the particular student. Confrontative rational-emotive techniques worked best with the brighter referred students, as an example, whereas the more Rogerian-type approaches were better suited for emotionally maladjusted students who mostly needed a friend to talk with where empathy could be developed in role-playing strategies. Further, contacts were attempted to reach the students' parents in order to inform them about their youngster's problem in school, their ISS suspension and to seek their cooperation at home. Depending on the student, some students were seen by the writer in subsequent counseling sessions in order to reinforce earlier strategies. Additionally, consultation with teachers who sent referrals was pursued, and in some cases behavioral management guidelines were suggested to be used within the class in order to curtail misbehaviors and reduce recidivism.

Parents were contacted immediately by the school principal to inform them of the misbehaviors that occurred within the school and to inform them of the in-house suspensions, as he does for OSS cases. The writer followed up the telephone contacts and asked the parents to come into the school for a disciplinary conference.

For each student referred to the ISS room, the student was put to work after counseling took place in an isolated part of the room, and the writer asked the referring teacher to keep the class work coming to keep him or her busy. Interestingly, as the students

referred were so focused on their assignments, they tended to be very productive and it was difficult for some teachers to keep up with them!

The writer was available only three days each week at this school for the suspension room coverage as he is also assigned to another elementary school for two days per week. While these referred students were counseled daily by the writer, on those absent days, the school social worker took over and provided the same consistent individual counseling approaches. As the suspension room was idle on some days, there were free days to return to the usual caseloads.

As predicted, some difficulties occurred with obtaining adequate staff coverage from the teachers. While they were almost overwhelmingly in favor of the ISS, only five of the school's teachers volunteered. The rest said they needed their limited time to work on their own school plans while their students were in "specials". Consequently, the school social worker and the writer were almost exclusively involved with all cases referred to ISS. As this took much away from their own schedules, it became convenient at times to place an occasional student in the hallway, strategically placed near the social worker's office, psychologist's office and a learning center class in order to monitor the referred student as best as possible. No more than two students were ever suspended at the same time which made their management amenable.

The principal continued to suspend some students out of school for more serious disturbances. However, on one occasion, he sent a student home to be suspended only for the parent to bring the

student back to school again. The parent commented that she had to work that day and no one was home to take care of her son, and now that the school has an in-house suspension program, he should use it!

Although the in-school suspension program continues in full force at this writing, this initial pilot program ended on January 31, 1992, and its outcome is reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Out-of-school suspension has been used wantonly at this elementary school for a host of misbehaviors which do not justify ejection from the school. These suspended students often find themselves being rewarded by their newly found freedom to roam the streets. Moreover, they typically suffer educationally from the interruption of schooling causing some of them to fall irreversibly behind in their classwork. They are also placed physically at risk to the hazards of the city streets. Their resultant treatment usually will cause them to want to repeat their misbehaviors because they have no personal insights with which to guide them.

Results from this ISS implementation at one school indicate that all objectives were met in the plan. Students missed fewer days out of class, kept up their work with studies, learned how to deal with school problems, felt more punished and the school staff and parents wholeheartedly endorsed it. Data that follow in this report

confirm that, even during this short period of time, ISS became a preferred alternative to OSS because it provided a more punitive, yet a safer, more rehabilitative and instructional setting that reduced the loss of learning and helped to prevent recidivism.

Further, the accomplished objectives included obtaining staff and parent support for the ISS implementation, obtaining adequate secluded space with appropriate requirements, some room coverage cooperation, the provision of classwork to suspendees, daily poignant counseling and an accounting of referred students and their behavioral changes.

Data collected from the inception of the ISS program at this elementary school, which began October 1, 1991 through January 31, 1992, show that there were 24 suspensions meted out by the school principal to 20 students. Nineteen of the suspensions were served in-house while the other five suspensions were served out of school. Twelve students were suspended in school only once, two students served two suspensions and one student served three suspensions. The five out-of-school suspensions were served only once by those five students. The time spent while in ISS ranged from half-day to three days, while the out-of-school suspensions ranged from two to three days. The writer counseled 15 of the referred students while the social worker counseled the other four.

Eleven different teachers sent 24 misbehaving students to the principal which resulted in their suspensions. Three teachers referred students four times; two teachers referred students three times; and six teachers referred students only once.

The referred students' misbehaviors ranged as follows:

<u>INCIDENTS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>TYPE OF SUSPENSION</u>
Fighting	8	ISS
Fighting	5	OSS
Argumentative	5	ISS
Disobedient	4	ISS
Disruptive	1	ISS
Threatening a teacher	1	ISS

A further breakdown from the collected data shows that, out of the 20 students who received both types of suspensions, 16 were black, 4 were white, 19 were male, and 18 were from single parent homes.

Results from the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1983) filled out pre- and post-ISS intervention were generally equivocal. There was no marked difference in the behavior profiles on this checklist as filled out by the involved teachers; they remained essentially the same for both ISS and OSS students. However, verbal reports from teachers about the specific misbehaviors of students referred to ISS which resulted in the suspensions were positive for 14 of the 15 students in that those misbehaviors had either declined or stopped leading to less recidivism. The verbal reports from the OSS students' teachers were only positive in 2 of the 5 referred students who showed improved behaviors.

The referred students to ISS were all asked at the end of their suspension how they felt about being kept in school instead of being sent home for punishment. Thirteen out of the 15 students stated they preferred going home. The reasons cited included having to do no class work at home, enjoying sleeping late, having the run of the house because no one else is home, watching television or playing with their Nintendo games and going out to play. The two ISS students who preferred staying in school instead of being sent home felt that remaining in school was better for them. All five OSS students interviewed, on the other hand, said they preferred being sent home. As one of the five put it: "My mother's not home to get on my case". Therefore, students felt more punished in ISS.

All referred students to ISS received daily counseling which specifically addressed their behavior problems. The improved behaviors with their concomitant fewer referrals are viewed as better self-management due to these students gaining better insight.

All teachers reported no drop in class grades as a result of the ISS where daily work was submitted to their suspended students, whereas 2 out of 5 OSS students were reported to have falling grades. If anything, many teachers found that they had a difficult time trying to keep up with their students' productivity while in ISS! Students, therefore, did not fall behind in their grades while in ISS.

All 13 referring teachers interviewed expressed satisfaction with the ISS, and some said they wished it had been done sooner. The reasons for their satisfaction were that they felt the children serving in OSS were at risk out on the streets without supervision,

they were often not getting punished for their misbehaviors, and they were losing out on class work and were prone to fall behind academically. Indeed, students in ISS did feel more punished but they were safer and were able to keep up with their classwork.

Although not all parents were interviewed, the nine that were contacted who had ISS referred youngsters were overwhelmingly in favor of the ISS program. In fact, as mentioned earlier, one student who had been sent home suspended was taken back to school by the mother who insisted her child be put in ISS as she knew the school had such a program!

It is felt, therefore, that the expected outcome of garnering support for the ISS plan by both the school staff and parents has been met because it has been viewed by them as a much preferred alternative to OSS.

Discussions

The in-school suspension is considered a success at this point in that 15 out of 20 students (75%) suspended by the principal were given in-house services which protected them from the hazards of school ejection, made them continue their studies relatively uninterrupted, were given supportive counseling and were kept in a punitive environment. The results indicate that the outcome sought from the ISS program was met. As an example, students now have fewer absences from school when they are suspended; their learning is continuous while in ISS; they gain greater insight into their

misbehaviors through counseling; the ISS is punitive because of its isolation and demand for work; and the staff and parents have voiced their approval of the plan. As DiSciullo (1984) has stressed, it is important to continue a suspended student's instruction within an isolated setting in the school provided that counseling be made an integral part of the ISS plan in order to ensure its success.

For each ISS referral, parents were notified at the outset of a suspension and were asked to come in for a disciplinary conference. Support from the parents was solicited at the meeting and recommendations for further home discipline were discussed. Parent involvement was also recommended by Sullivan (1989) who feels that an important key to the success of ISS is to get parents involved from the outset of an ISS behavioral referral in order to increase school-home communication. The data suggest this partnership is successful because parents developed better awareness of their youngsters' problems at school and established better cooperation with the school staff. This home support is felt to be partly responsible for the success of this ISS program.

The suspended student was immediately counseled by either the school social worker or the school psychologist. Efforts were made to problem-solve solutions with the student in order to prevent future misbehaviors. As Hock & Worner (1987) suggested, any counseling strategy used should be made problem-specific in order to ensure that the ISS students gain insights into their misbehaviors in order to prevent their reoccurrence and to help reduce recidivism. Role-modeling techniques were additionally used to create empathy, and cognitive restructuring was applied in order

to change the mind-set of some recalcitrant offenders. Further, if students showed severe, repetitive misbehaviors, classroom behavior management strategies were developed in consultation with the writer. Moreover, additional counseling to 5 out of the 15 ISS students took place as behavioral follow-ups in order ensure continued improved behaviors. Mizeli (1977) stressed the importance of follow-up counseling in needed cases following their ISS stays in order to ensure positive behavioral gain. As noted earlier, the importance of counseling during the referred students' ISS was made emphatic by Short & Noblit (1985). Only the 1 ISS program out of 10 they studied which offered counseling became successful in improving long term behavioral change and reducing recidivism.

A daily account was kept of all ISS referrals. A log was developed for recording all ISS referrals and activities. The information collected included demographics about the student and his or her family. Other pertinent information such as the type of incident, name, grade, age, sex, and race or ethnic background was included. Other miscellaneous information was added if found pertinent. The purpose of acquiring this information was to be able to gather accurate data on suspension referrals and to have it form the basis for comparisons in order to judge the ISS program's overall effectiveness.

The writer asked the referring teacher to fill out the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1983) at the outset of the referral problem, and again at the end of this study in order to help determine behavioral changes. Moreover, the teacher was asked for data to determine whether or not the referred youngster kept up

with the assignments, and to check on class grade changes.

Unfortunately, the data from the Checklist became inconclusive as a measure of behavioral change. The behavior patterns elicited pre- and post-intervention of ISS on the Checklist showed insignificant changes. Several reasons account for the inconclusivity of those results. Behavioral change requires time; only four months have gone by since the implementation of ISS at this school. Secondly, this instrument is not sensitive enough to be able to pick up small gains in behavioral improvement. Importantly, all teachers whose referred students ended up in ISS spoke positively about the improvements they had seen in those original misbehaviors. As an example, if fighting had been an original complaint, fighting had ceased.

Another practicum effect ISS has created is to provide teachers during this particular spring of 1992 with some relief in case they become overburdened with difficult children. Recent special education mandates, as an example, require the part-time mainstreaming of behaviorally disordered students to regular classes. The school was slated to begin some partial mainstreaming of behaviorally disordered children from their self-contained classes in September, 1991. It was anticipated, therefore, that there would be a greater demand from teachers to temporarily remove some of these disrupting children. This would have the potential for an even larger OSS problem. This ISS plan, therefore, was viewed as helpful in temporarily relieving the overburdened teacher from those children who habitually act out, although it was by no means considered as a suitable permanent placement for behaviorally maladaptive special education students. In fact, one

special education student was placed in ISS for a half-day, which served more as a time-out and a relief for the teacher at the time. Center & McKittrick (1987) caution about the use of suspensions for special education students, and cite that in *Goss v. Lopez* the Supreme Court ruled that, as long as the misbehavior is not directly related to the youngster's handicap, "a short-term suspension is not a change in placement" (p. 2).

The writer additionally cautioned that there would be some referral cases for suspension where ISS would not be considered appropriate. At his discretion, the principal chose to send home children who presented a danger to others in the school. As such, only those five students who were involved in serious fighting were ejected from the school.

Teaching staff volunteerism had been viewed as a weakness in the day-to-day operation of the ISS room. As alluded to earlier, sharing of this responsibility has been done by the writer three days each week and the school social worker on the other two days. Additionally, five teachers have donated some small segments of their limited time to help cover the ISS room.

As Radin (1988) has found in other urban schools, black children in this school have also been found to be overrepresented in suspensions. Sixteen out of 20 (80%) suspended students were black, and the school population is only 52% black. This results in a 28% overrepresentation of blacks suspended at this school. Radin states that a principal reason for this suspension discrimination is "often the mismatch between the middle-class expectations of the school and the cultural norms of subgroups of students" (p.470).

An expected outcome of the ISS program was that students would not fall behind in their classwork. However, there was much productivity resulting from the suspended students who did their daily assignments uninterruptedly while in ISS. They were able to focus better on their assignments and perform quickly. As a result, the ISS staff member found the need to often ask for more work to be sent from the teacher to keep the suspended student busy. For this reason, students serving in ISS were able to keep up, if not get ahead, of their classroom work. Admittedly, they were missing out on direct classroom instruction as well as informative class discussions and other projects.

Recommendations

As this in-school suspension program has shown early success after only its first four months of implementation at this elementary school, it is recommended that it should continue in its present format. The principal, teaching staff and parents have all expressed tremendous satisfaction with this alternative to OSS. Fifteen out of 20 children have benefited from its in-house protective environment by being saved from the possible hazards of the streets. These students have received continuing instruction to prevent them from academic failure. Moreover, suspended students have received individual counseling to help increase their behavioral insights to prevent them from committing future transgressions and reducing recidivism. The ISS setting is also deemed to be more

punitive, judging from the students surveyed and the lack of many repeat offenders.

It is recommended that other elementary schools within this city be made aware of this ISS implementation, and that these results be shared to ease the way for a possible implementation of their own. It behooves all schools to do their utmost in diminishing their out-of-school suspension rates in order to provide a safer haven for these children at risk as well as a more efficient disciplinary system that discourages misbehaviors.

It is recommended that funding be generated through a federal or state grant in order to hire a part-time teacher-counselor to service the ISS room. The school principal insists that a teacher-aide would not be a qualified candidate, although they have been used in other cities. As Sullivan (1989) has pointed out, an important key to a successful ISS plan is to employ a full-time teacher with counseling skills who can provide constancy to referred students. The lack of a consistent ISS staff member has been the weak link in this program as students do not know from hour to hour and day to day whether they will be in an ISS room one time, outside in the hallway the next, or who their ISS teacher will be. Their only reliable caretaker has been this writer and the social worker upon whom they have learned to depend but who are limited by their own duties. As local school funding is unavailable for an ISS teacher, the resources mentioned will be explored.

What is additionally recommended is that those teachers who have been found to refer their discipline cases the most to the principal, while considering strongly the types of students they have

in their classes, may need to enhance their behavior management repertoire so that they may more effectively deal with the disruptive, acting out child within the confines of their class. While teachers do have their share of more difficult children with which to deal from year to year, it is also clear that some teachers lack the management skills to be effective.

Dissemination

The results from this in-school suspension implementation, which has taken place in an urban elementary school for a duration of only four months, need to be disseminated to all interested schools which may also feel the need to improve their disciplinary suspension policy. It is felt that the results are so impressive that the other four elementary schools in this city need to know of its success! With their principals' permission, the writer will ask to address their staff meetings and discuss the implementation of this successful ISS program. Further, a local school newsletter will be asked to publish an account of this ISS program. As opportunities arise, the writer will volunteer to speak on the ISS issue at various state educational and psychological meetings. Additionally, this paper has been recommended for inclusion in the ERIC database.

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL SUSPENSION SURVEY

SCHOOL SUSPENSION SURVEY

May 20, 1991

TO: All Regular Education Teaching Staff.

FROM: Jerry Guindon, School Psychologist.

SUBJECT: School Suspension.

GRADE: _____

In order to plan for a possible alternative to our present home-bound suspension policy for next year, would you fill out this short questionnaire? Please return it to me as soon as possible. Thank you.

DURING 1990-1991:

- 1) What student behaviors constituted your referring a child to the principal's office?
- 2) How many behavior referrals did you make to the principal's office during the year?
- 3) How many were repeat offenders?
- 4) How many of those referrals ended up becoming home-bound suspensions?
- 5) Do you feel that home-bound suspensions are effective?
- 6) Would an in-school suspension program be more helpful?
- 7) What other alternatives could you suggest?
- 8) Do you have any comments on the issue?

Thank you. I appreciate your participation in this survey.