Leron M. Rahynes

EDAS 5343

Suspending In School Suspension? : Is ISS a valid means of disciplinary action to reduce negative student behaviors?

Dr. Keith East

November 24, 2015

Abstract

This paper explored whether or not In School Suspensions (ISS) is effective in reducing student behavioral problems. Research was conducted with 6-8th grade students in a rural middle school in the upstate of South Carolina for the purposes of determining if ISS, in its current design a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors. The study concluded that it was not an effective method for reduction of negative student behaviors and that an overwhelming majority of students assigned ISS throughout the 2014-2015 school year could be demographically profiled as male 7th grade students receiving a regular education curriculum. This study provides valuable information, perspective, and an eye opening picture into one of the most commonly used forms of discipline in middle and high schools across the nation.

Table of Contents

Discipline in education has evolved very much throughout our human existence. It has evolved from the floggings in early England, forever expulsions in India, mouths being washed out with soap for foul language in the US, to the after school detentions of today. What has guided this transition is the questionable nature of the various methods and their effectiveness. Some measures that are being used today still raise viable questions. In school suspension (ISS) has long been used as an alternative to out of school suspension (OSS) for student behaviors. Proponents of ISS argue that it is a better means of disciplinary action than OSS because students are still at the school and can be sent work to complete throughout the day. Others say that it is still not a good means of disciplinary action because students still miss out on direct instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Previous studies have shown a direct link between student achievement and actual time spent receiving direct instruction. According to state regulations students must have 120 days of "seat time" (classroom instruction) in order to receive a unit of credit. Although excused and still counted, time in ISS or OSS can substantially reduce the amount of time a student spends under direct instruction. Time away from the classroom can be attributed to many different factors connected to at-risk youth. Graduation rates, Special Education population, and incarceration rates all have ties to student attendance. Lack of classroom instruction not only leads to lower achievement but in some cases in contributes to a cycle of negative behaviors due to disengagement and more instances of ISS and OSS. This correlational study is a body of research in response to concerns to an overwhelming amount of recidivism in the In School Suspension (ISS) program at Gable Middle School (GMS) in Roebuck, South Carolina. This disciplinary measure in essence

is not reducing the occurrence of negative behaviors in actuality increasing them. This explains the high recidivism of students returning to ISS.

Purpose of this Study and Justification

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of ISS as a disciplinary measure relative to reducing negative student behaviors at Gable Middle School. Although other data exists that shows the ineffectiveness of OSS this study's primary focus will be determining the effectiveness of ISS. ISS is a disciplinary measure that costs time, money, and student seat-time. The study will help determine whether ISS needs to continue to be used or should a more cost-effective and academia friendly measure be sought out.

Hypothesis and Related Research Questions

It is the hypothesis of the teacher-researcher that the data gathered from this research study will show that ISS is not an effective measure to reduce recidivism or the occurrences of negative behavior. The study's focus is predicated on answering the following research questions:

1. Is ISS, in its current design a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors?

2. Is there a positive correlation between the number of negative behaviors of certain students and the assigning of ISS?

3. Does the use of ISS as a disciplinary measure reduce the occurrence of negative behaviors of students?

The teacher-researcher chose a correlational design for this study because of the relationship between the two variables being studied without any attempt to influence them. The variables are not being manipulated in any way, shape, or form. This research design is best for casual-comparative research or *associational research.* The teacher-researcher will collect quantitative data for the purposes of this study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Most educators, teacher-researchers, and administrators would be in solid agreement with Morris and Howard (2003) who indicate that inappropriate behaviors of students are not a new issue in public education; teachers have reported behavior problems in school since the early beginnings of the public school system. Inappropriate behaviors are a part of education that is here to stay. Challenging the status quo is a part of life that pushes forward continual growth and the evolution of not only education but of society as a whole. Said inappropriate behaviors have been classified into different types that are handled with varying levels of discipline. Burke (2014) defines these classifications as follows:

Discretionary offense. An offense for which school administrators have discretion in assigning discipline to students. Examples include defiance, truancy, disruptive behavior, disrespect, and fighting. Contrast with *mandatory offense.*

Exclusionary discipline. Discipline imposed by school administrators that removes a student from classroom instruction or school.

There are extensive amounts of literature that address the question of whether or not In School Suspensions (ISS) is effective in reducing student behavioral problems. As other studies demonstrate, the vast majority of suspensions are for minor infractions of school rules, such as disrupting class, tardiness, and dress code violations, rather than for serious violent criminal behavior (Losen, 2013). With ISS being such a widely used form

of discipline it beckons another look as a viable form of disciplinary response to negative student behaviors. The idea that we must "kick out" the bad kids so the good kids can learn is a myth, because there are many viable alternatives that do not result in chaotic school environments (Losen, 2013).

In-school suspension is the temporary removal of a student from his or her regular classroom or classrooms for disciplinary purposes. The student remains under the direct supervision of school personnel (the suspended student is in the same location as school personnel assigned to the student's supervision) (Burke, 2014). This method of reducing student misbehavior has been in use since the 1960's. Although there are many negative factors linked to the use of exclusionary discipline it has still been reported to be one of the most commonly used disciplinary consequences for student behavior (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

According to Morris and Howard (2003) there are four variations to the In-school Suspension program; Punitive, Academic, Therapeutic, and Individual. The main differences in the programs are the amount of support staff and interaction time between the staff and the student during the student's placement in the ISS program. The Punitive model of ISS is that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s continued through the 1900s in schools across the United States and is still the most often utilize program in schools today (Amuso, 2007; Morris & Howard, 2003).

When disaggregated data is presented on students who are suspended many outside factors come into play. The data reveals that there are many problems that students cannot control themselves. Achillies, McLaughlin, & Croninger (2007) report

that studies have uncovered racial, socioeconomic, and gender disparities in rates of suspension and expulsion. These are often reasons or commonalities among students who receive exclusionary discipline more often. ISS can also have an impact graduation rates, incarceration rates, self-esteem, student achievement, and English language learning students (Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools, 1992). These studies found that the percentage of students receiving exclusionary discipline was higher for male students than for female students; higher for Black, American Indian, Hispanic, and multiracial students and lower for Asian students than for White students; and higher for students in special education than for students not in special education (Burke 2014). As data is disaggregated it shows that certain factors increase one's likelihood to be suspended as well. One of these factors is where a student may be within their elementary or secondary journey. For example, the likelihood a student will be suspended increases from about 2.4% in elementary school to 11% in middle school (Losen, 2013). The disaggregation of data also reveals much disproportionality. This starts with gender and matriculates into other areas that are somewhat concerning. According to the study conducted by Burke (2014) the percentage of students receiving exclusionary discipline was higher for male students than for female students across all grade spans.

When data is disaggregated further it's revealed that the way people learn also makes them more likely to receive exclusionary discipline. This usually includes but definitely not limited to students with learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, and language barriers. Students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended than their non-disabled peers (Kresmien, Leone, & Achillies, 2006). Losen (2013) notes that English learners increase in likelihood by 10.1% to receive exclusionary discipline when

moving from elementary to middle school.

The disparities continue in the case of special education. One in five secondary school students with disabilities were suspended at nearly triple the rate of students without disabilities (Losen, 2013). The high suspension rates of students with disabilities could be an indication that they are not getting the help that they need within the school system according to the laws set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA).

Race and ethnicity is probably the most concerning disparity brought on through the overuse of suspensions in discipline. Black and Hispanic students are a group that has glaring differences from non-minorities when it comes to discipline. For example, gaps in percentages of White and racial/ethnic minority students receiving discipline have widened (Losen, 2013). In Burke's (2014) study the percentage of students receiving exclusionary discipline was highest for Black students across all grade spans. This is a very troubling disparity. As a matter of fact, a finding in Losen's (2013) national study found an increase in the risk for suspension between school levels when disaggregated by race; an increased risk of 18 points for blacks but only about 5 points for whites. These findings are very similar to a study conducted by Pfleger (2013) where he found that disciplinary actions are assigned to Black students at more than five times the rate of Asian American students and three times that of White students. The percentage of actions assigned to Black students is 36%, compared with a rate of 7% for Asian American students and 11% for White students. While the racial discipline gap has always been largest in the middle schools and high schools, it has grown dramatically at the secondary level since the early 1970s.

Use of suspension in schools is also comes with a lot of recidivism of negative student behaviors. One of the key findings of a study conducted by Burke (2014) was that nearly 40 percent of students who were suspended received more than one suspension. This is also a trend that is often seen in the correctional system as well. It seems that students become part of a cycle that follows them into adolescence and adulthood. High suspension and expulsion rates are associated with lower academic achievement and with higher rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Skiba, 2008). Pflager (2013) mirrors this sentiment with his research on the current Colorado discipline policy where opponents criticize what they see as a school-to-prison pipeline through which students, particularly students of color, are channeled into the criminal justice system at an early age.

Essentially the data in these studies could lead one to infer that one's ability to advance in the educational field is tied to their race, socio-economic status, first language, and gender. Students who are grouped into more than one area are affected the most. Perhaps the most disturbing finding is that nationally, on average, 36% of all black male students with disabilities enrolled in middle schools and high schools were suspended at least once in 2009-2010 (Losen, 2013).

These findings bring about some very important questions that should be looked into such as whether racial disproportionality reflects a disproportionate number of students of color engaging in certain types of behaviors, or whether it reflects students of color being punished for behaviors that White students engage in without such serious consequences (Pflager 2012). The proverbial deck has been stacked against many students due to circumstances outside of their control.

Arguments against exclusionary Discipline:

Many studies speak up as proponents of change for the discipline system as it stands now. Advocates for the restructuring the current disciplinary model for negative behaviors cite a number of reasons for the need to reform. Current practices have been in place for quite some time and have not changed much if at all. No evidence indicates that suspension and expulsion lead to positive changes in student behavior or safer schools (Skiba, 2000).

As education continues to evolve and change for the better shaping of student lives and their future as productive citizens, the same should ring true in how they are handled when they step outside of the realms of what educators and administrators call "appropriate". Greater awareness will help produce more effective approaches that create safe, healthy, and productive learning environments (Losen, 2013). Even though the most frequent reasons for student suspension were physical aggression, verbal disrespect, and profanity with school staff (Allman, 2011), there are long-term measures that can help remedy these behaviors instead of suspension. Losen also expands on how harsh punitive responses to negative behaviors do more harm than good and efforts to reduce suspensions should also improve education rates, achievement scores, and life outcomes, while also decreasing the rate of incarceration for juveniles and adults.

There is always room for improvement throughout education and the way discipline is handled. Research now suggests that many commonsense approaches are more effective that suspending students (Losen, 2013). Administrators must take advantage and be open to considering possible alternatives to ISS. There are well-

documented methods and trainings for teachers that can create safe and effective learning environments in our middle and high schools without relying on the frequent suspension of students who are at the greatest risk for academic failure. Nocera (2014) suggests that a school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) can be an effective alternative to traditional reactive, punitive approaches to problem behavior. Losen (2013) expresses a similar opinion and believes that reserving suspension as a measure of last resort can lead to higher achievement and improved graduation rates.

The School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) program is similar to a Response to intervention (RTI) program. Success of a SWPBS program are tied to a number of factors that include: (a) promotion of social and academic competence in students; (b) a whole-school approach that engages students, staff, and families; (c) ongoing training of staff to develop and sustain practices with fidelity; (d) the use of evidence-based interventions and supports; (e) a team approach with leadership at all levels; and (f) the use of data to continually evaluate and revise practices (Nocera, 2014). The SWPBS program is organized into 3 tiers of intervention. Tier 1 is about support, expectations, and systems put in place for students to succeed. Tiers 2 and 3 are for students who need more structured or intensive interventions or support. The other part of the program includes a school improvement framework that is designed to help and support teachers. This phase is completed in the following steps: Step 1: Establish goals/identify standards, Step 2: Develop school improvement plan, Step 3: Develop Assessment/Implement teaching strategies, and Step 4: Loop feedback. The implementation of the program showed many positive results. Reductions were seen in all eight of the most frequently occurring infractions, including fighting, insubordination,

class disruption, inappropriate behavior, skipping detention, cutting class, tardiness, and disrespect to staff (Nocera, 2014).

The program had other effects as well that reached beyond the occurrence of negative student behaviors. One teacher indicated that the significant decrease in suspensions and referrals noticeably contributed to a more positive overall school climate and that it encouraged teachers to take note of the positive things students did. In turn, this teacher felt that students felt they were getting more recognition and that their teachers liked them and cared about them.

Arguments for Exclusionary discipline:

There are also those who feel that there is no need to make changes to the structure of exclusionary discipline in its current model. Some suggest that ISS is a great way to administer discipline while keeping the student in the school and having work sent to them to complete throughout the duration of the school day. Some teachers in a study in Australia have also weighed in on the matter expressing feelings that it is difficult to teach in a classroom with students who regularly exhibit inappropriate behaviors. With the recent Government initiated demand that all students be educated in inclusive classrooms, there has been considerable impact on teachers and their teaching practices (Moore, 2014). The implications of student behavior for learning are becoming an increasingly major concern of teachers, parents and policy makers. Disruptive student behavior not only impedes learning outcomes for students but also impacts negatively on teacher efficacy and well-being (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Lewis, 1999). Moore (2014) backs teachers by explaining that teachers face the complex task of

catering to the socio-cultural and academic curriculum within classrooms to ensure that the needs of all students are met. This is a task researchers describe as more challenging owing to educational reform and curriculum changes during the past 10 to15 years. These trends cause considerable concern for teachers and impact on their teaching in many ways. Moore (2014) argued that suspension is not intended as a punishment and the expectation is that students should be returned to school at the earliest opportunity.

Moore (2014) has suggested a suspension centre[1] in her study. The suspension centre is an intervention for students who are on long suspension and have been identified by their school as likely to benefit from a structured program to assist their successful return to schooling as soon as possible. The *Purpose* of suspension centres is described in the following way.

The new suspension centres will:

— form part of a range of behaviour[2] services for students who are disruptive (school discipline plans, behaviour team support to schools, withdrawal programs);

— increase the capacity of schools to deal successfully with disruptive students; and

— assist students to make a successful re-entry to schooling (Moore, 2014).

Conclusion

The use of ISS is still a subject that has many educators and administrators divided. Some believe that the public should reject the high-suspending status quo and

[1] This is the British spelling of the word “center”.
[2] This is the British spelling of the word “behavior”

take measures to ensure that the approach to challenging adolescent behavior is age appropriate and not counter-productive (Losen, 2013). There is no evidence that imposing exclusionary discipline on more students has increased school safety, improved learning climates in schools, or improved the behavior of students receiving such discipline (American Psychological Association, 2008). In fact, the increased use of exclusionary discipline has been accompanied by undesirable consequences for both students and schools (Burke, 2014). This is clearly not a “cure” or solution to the negative behaviors displayed by students in the academic setting; if anything some would say that it is nothing more than a catalyst.

Chapter 3

Methods

Sample and Site

The teacher-researcher conducted the experimental research study at Gable Middle School (GMS) in Roebuck, South Carolina. The school includes grades 6-8 with a total enrollment of 802 students. Gable Middle School has a very diverse student population, serving various ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. The school prides itself on possessing a community-like culture that is representative of the environment that many of the students will eventually work in. To obtain participants for the study a cluster random sample of students across grade levels 6-8 who have been administered the disciplinary consequence of In School Suspension (ISS) during the 2014-2015 school year will be used. They will determine if ISS, in its current design is a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors.

Access and Permission

The teacher-researcher requested and received permission from the administration at GMS to view discipline records using the administrator look up on the PowerSchool program. The participants were not identified during the study and the result of the study are to held in confidence. Additionally, as the data gathered from PowerSchool, a school based data system, parental permission was not necessary.

Procedures for Data Collection

The teacher-researcher will conduct a study in which quantitative data relative to the disciplinary incidents of ISS will be collected, reviewed, and analyzed. The study will track the recidivism of students who receive the disciplinary consequence of ISS for negative behaviors from September 2014 through May 2015. Students who demonstrate a pattern of recidivism (disciplined 2 or more times) in ISS will be tracked through the collection of data in order to discover trends in offenses demographics, and academic achievement. The study was conducted in Roebuck, SC. The quantitative data will be collected from the administrator level of the PowerSchool software and Excel spreadsheets along with graphs, tables, and charts to compare the data. The study's findings were used to draw conclusions to determine the effectiveness of ISS on negative behaviors. Additionally, the findings may help determine whether or not ISS needs to continue to be used or should a more cost-effective and academia friendly measure be sought out in lieu of exclusionary discipline measures.

Validity and Reliability

The software Powerschool/PowerTeacher was used software as an instrument to collect data. This software was created by Pearson School Systems. Teachers and administrators have long used it across the country to track and record information regarding students' grades, demographics, contact information, and discipline records. The following is a statement from their website about the software: PowerSchool is the fastest-growing, most widely used web-based student information system, supporting 13 million students in all 50 states and over 65 countries. PowerSchool enables

today's educators to make timely decisions that impact student performance while creating a collaborative environment for parents, teachers and students to work together in preparing 21st century learners for the future. PowerSchool provides the full range of features needed by administrators at the district and school level in addition to portals for teachers, parents, and students.

Chapter 4

Results

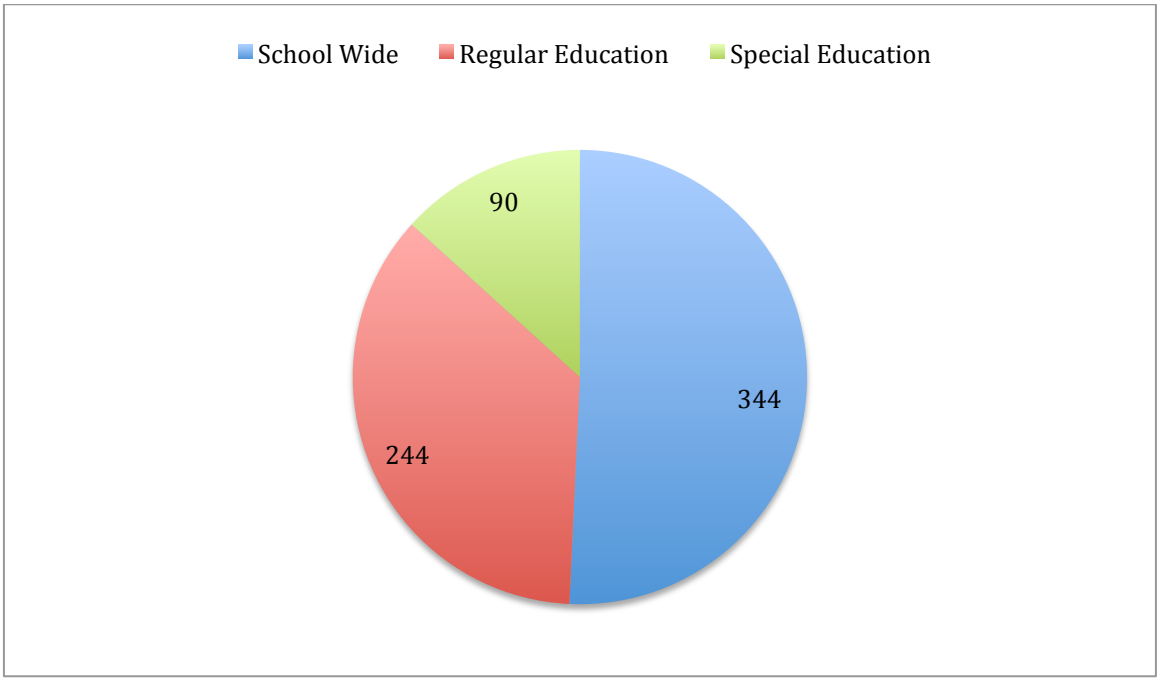
In this chapter the teacher-researcher presents data gathered from a study of the correlation between the use of In School Suspension (ISS) as a disciplinary measure and the occurrence of negative behaviors of students. The study was conducted in an effort to determine if ISS, in its current design, is a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors. The following tables present the disaggregated data from Gable Middle School relative to students receiving ISS for the 2014-2015 academic years. Inclusive of all grade levels, a total of 394 students received one or more days in ISS of which 334 (84.77%) were male and 60 (15.22%) were female. Of the 394 students receiving ISS, 291 (73.86%) were classified as regular education with 244 (61.9%) being male and 47 (11.93%) being female. A total of 103 (26%) ISS recipients were Special education students with 90 (22.8%) being male and 13 (3.29%) being female (Table 1, Figure 1).

Students who were assigned ISS more than once (2-5 times) are classified as recidivists. Some recidivists were assigned ISS for repeated behaviors. 18.8% of students assigned ISS were recidivists. 12.18% of students assigned ISS were recidivists with repeated behaviors.

Table 1 - Distribution of In School Suspensions Classification

	Male	Female	Total
School Wide	334 (84.77%)	60 (15.22%)	364
Regular Educ.	244 (61.9%)	47 (11.93%)	291 (73.86%)
Special Educ.	90 (22.8%)	13 (3.29%)	103 (26%)

Figure 1: Distribution of In School by Suspensions Classification

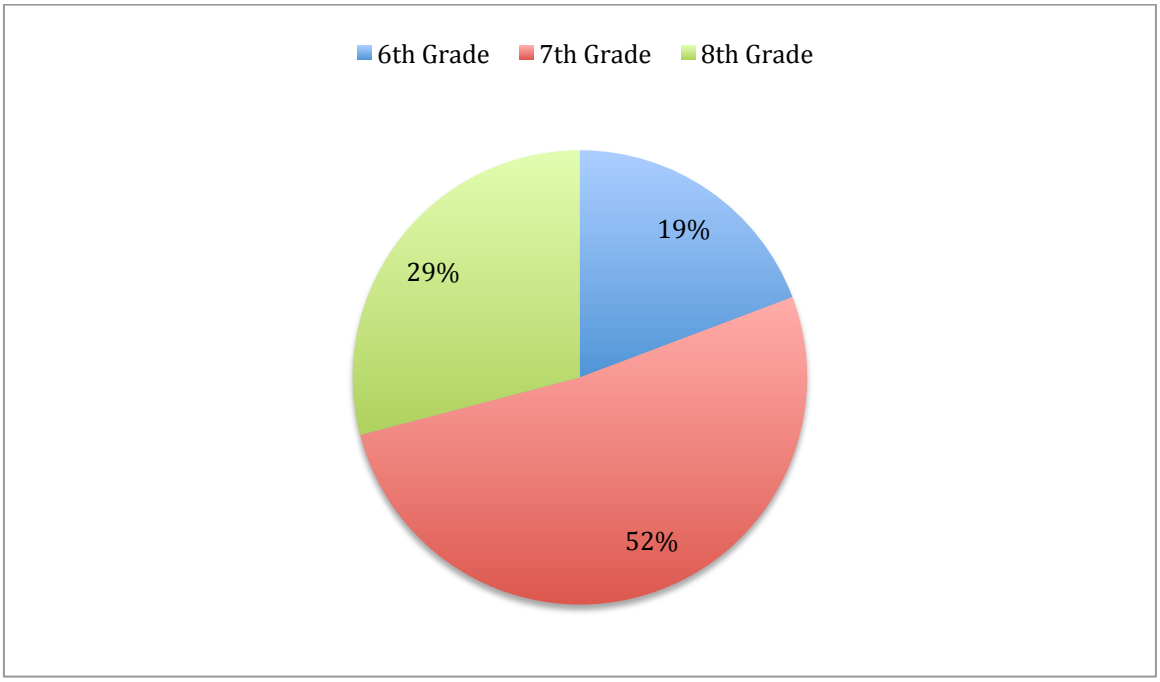


The total number of students who received one or more days of ISS was comprised of 75 6th graders (19%), 201 7th graders (51%), and 113 8th graders (28.7%)(Table 2, Figure 2).

Table 2 Distribution of In School Suspensions School wide

6th Grade	19%
7th Grade	51%
8th Grade	28.70%

Figure 2: Distribution of In School Suspensions School wide

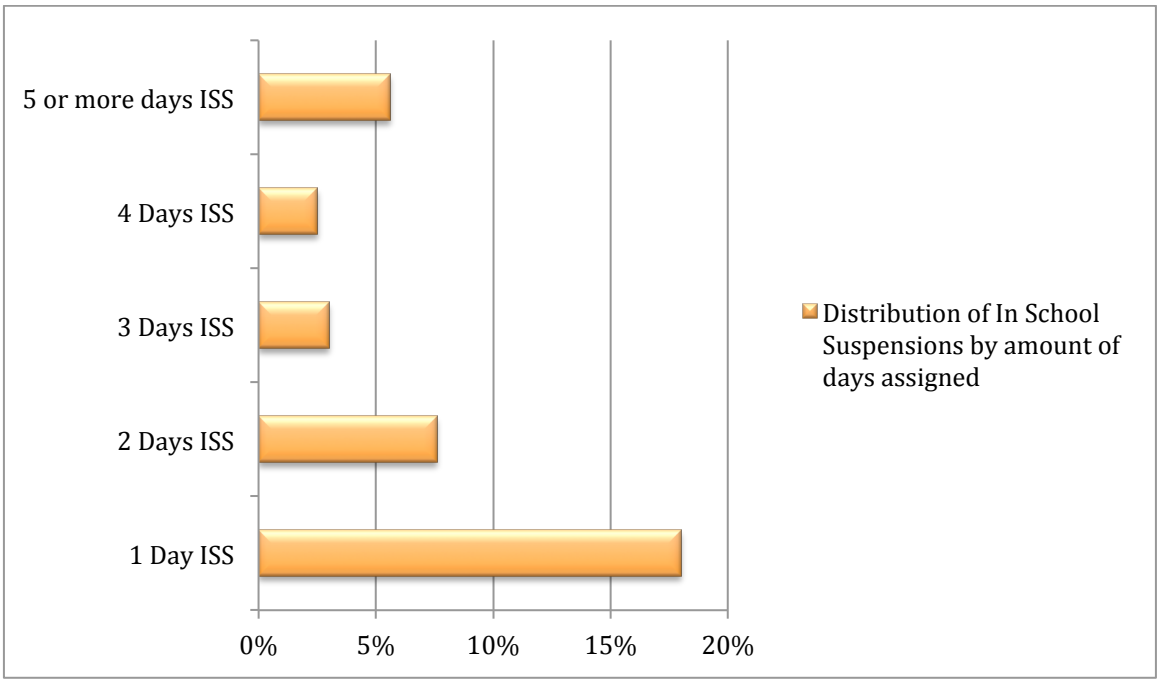


The number of times that students were assigned ISS during the 2014-2015 school year included 71 students (18%) who were assigned ISS once by their administrator, 30 students (7.6%) who were assigned ISS twice. 12 students (3%) that were assigned ISS 3 times while 10 (2.5%) and 22(5.6%) students were assigned 4 and 5 times (Table 3, fig 3.).

Table 3 Distribution of In School Suspensions by amount of days assigned

1 Day ISS	18%
2 Days ISS	7.60%
3 Days ISS	3%
4 Days ISS	2.50%
5 or more days ISS	5.60%
1 Day ISS	18%

Figure 3: Distribution of In School Suspensions by amount of days assigned



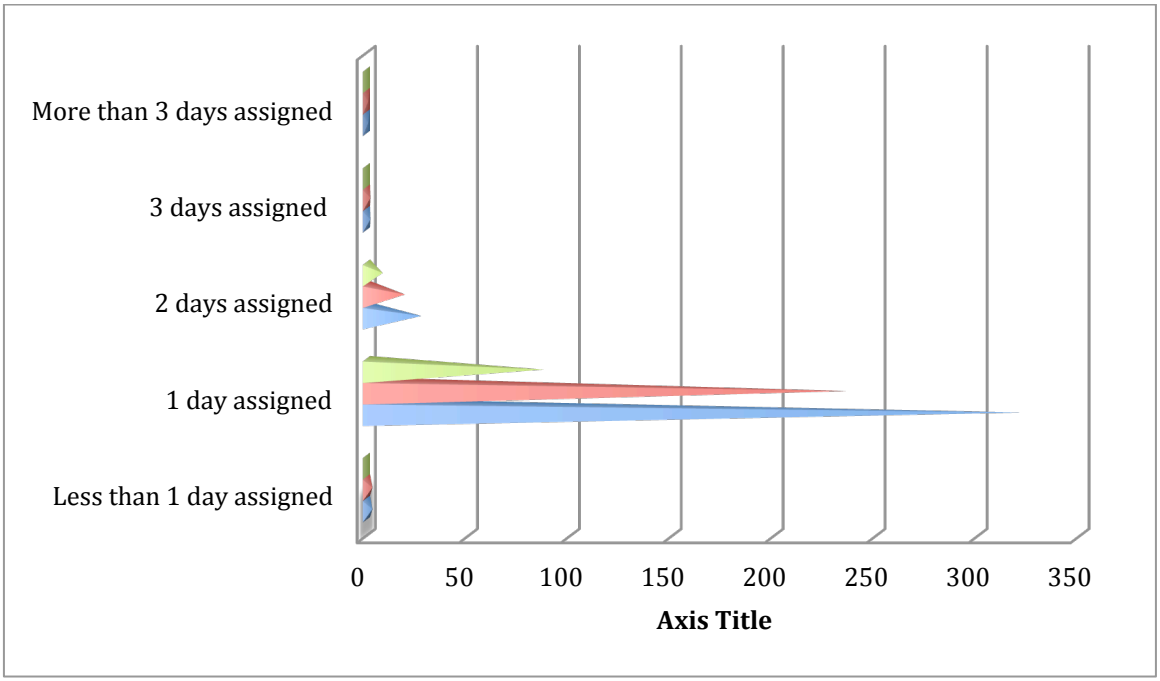
Of the 394 students assigned ISS, 3 students (8%) were assigned less than 1 day of ISS for a discipline infraction, of these 3 students 3 were part of the regular education curriculum and 0 were part of the special education curriculum. 322 students (84.3%) were assigned 1 full day of ISS for an individual discipline infraction, 236 (59.9%) of students were part of the regular education program and 87 (22%) of students were in the special education program. 27 students (6.85%) were assigned 2 days of ISS for an individual discipline infraction, 19 students (4.82%) were regular education students and 8 (2%) were part of the special education program. Two students (.5%) were assigned 3

days of ISS for an individual discipline infraction, both were part of the regular education program. Only 1 student (.76%) was assigned more that 3 days of ISS at once. This student was a regular education student (Table 4, Figure 4).

Table 4: Distribution of In School Suspensions by number of days assigned at once

	Total Students	Regular Education Students	Special Education Students
Less than 1 day assigned	**3**	**3**	**0**
1 day assigned	**322**	**236**	**87**
2 days assigned	**27**	**19**	**8**
3 days assigned	**2**	**2**	**0**
More than 3 days assigned	**1**	**1**	**0**

Figure 4: Distribution of In School Suspensions by number of days assigned at once

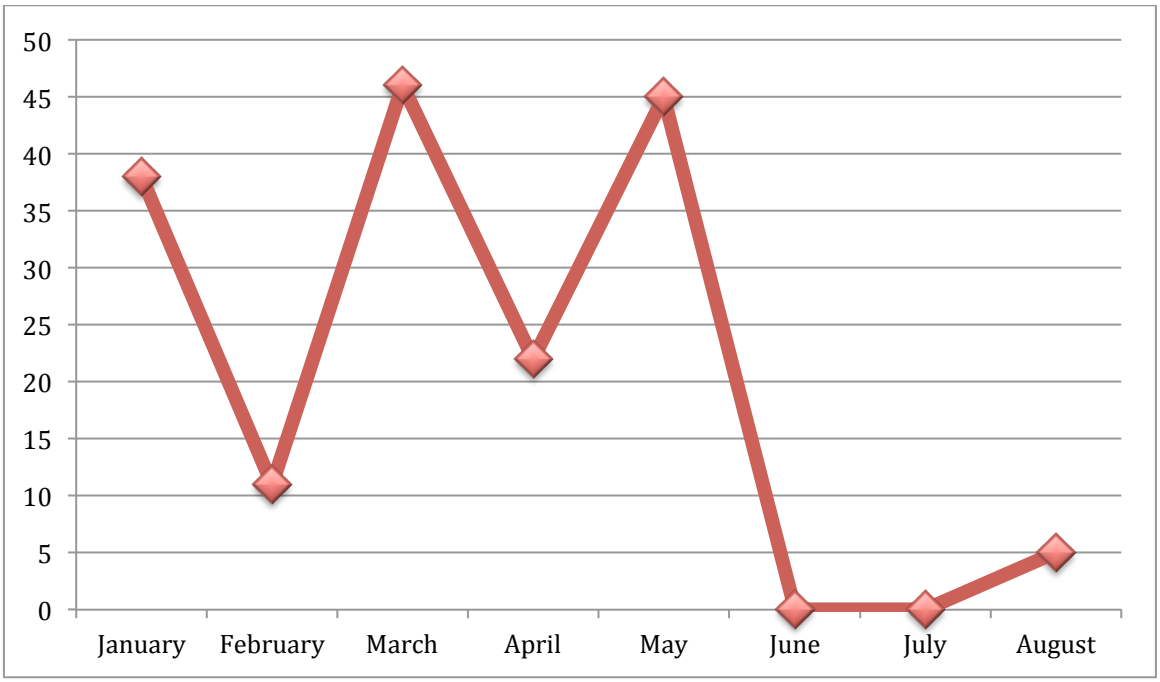


During the 2014-2015 school year ISS was assigned 38 times in the month of January, 11 times in February, 46 times in March, 22 times in April, 45 times in May, 0 for June and July, 5 in August, 37 in September, 40 in October, 51 in November, and 53 in December (Table 5, fig. 5).

Table 5 Distribution of In School Suspensions by Month

January	38
February	11
March	46
April	22
May	45
June	0
July	0
August	5
September	37
October	40
November	51
December	53

Figure 5: Distribution of In School Suspensions by Month



The findings of this study and the data presented will be further developed and discussed in Chapter 5 Discussion/Conclusions. Additionally, conclusions will be drawn as well as recommendations for action and further study will be suggested.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

This study, conducted on whether or not In School Suspensions (ISS) is effective in reducing student behavioral problems was predicated upon answering three specifically directed research questions.

Research question 1: Is ISS, in its current design a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors?

The fact that ISS, in its current design as a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors is certainly debatable. The program itself is viable and capable of being successful with considerations to some changes. The number of students who were assigned ISS once (18%) was nearly identical to those who were assigned it more than once (18.8%). In other words, the number of students who "get into trouble" only once is equal to those that "get into trouble" more than once. A majority of those with recidivating assignments to ISS were for repeated negative behaviors. This does not reflect effectiveness in the goal of reducing negative student behaviors.

Research Question 2: Is there a positive correlation between the number of negative behaviors of certain students and the assigning of ISS?

For certain demographics like gender, grade level, and educational classification, there is a positive correlation between the number of negative behaviors and the "types"

of students who are assigned ISS. Numerous identifying demographics and other defining factors separate how often certain types of students are assigned ISS. In School Suspension seems to be chosen as a disciplinary measure more often for males (84.77%) than females (15.22%). This is similar for students in regular education curriculum and Special Education curriculum when disaggregated by gender.

When data is disaggregated relative to grade, 7th grade has the majority of ISS assignments. Students in 7th grade are 32percent more likely than 6th graders and 22.3 percent more likely than 8th graders to receive ISS as a disciplinary measure; this conclusion was drawn due to the fact that over half (51%) of students who were assigned ISS came from the 7th grade.

Nearly one third of the total number of students being assigned to ISS receive Special Education services which would conclude that students who receive Special Education services are much more likely to be assigned ISS. It would seem that an overwhelming majority of students assigned ISS throughout the 2014-2015 school year could be demographically profiled as male 7th grade students receiving a regular education curriculum.

School wide, the amount of negative behaviors does reflect a positive correlation for the amount of students but when the data is disaggregated on an individual student basis it does not reflect a positive correlation.

Research Question 3: Does the use of ISS as a disciplinary measure reduce the occurrence of negative behaviors of students?

When ISS is used as a disciplinary measure it does reduce the *reoccurrence* of negative behaviors on an individual basis. The amount of 1st time ISS recipients is nearly the same as that of 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5+ ISS recipients combined. There is still a large amount of negative behaviors that take place as a whole but of the low recidivism reflected in the data, proves a reduction in how often they take place.

In most cases, students are only assigned ISS on a day by day basis (one day at a time). One day assignments to ISS make up 84.3% of the total days assigned. Students are rarely assigned more than 1 day at a time.

As many teachers tend to believe, students are more likely to have discipline infractions towards holiday breaks. In the months leading to December there is a gradual increase in the amount of ISS assignments. Students tend to spike in negative behaviors during the "post holiday stretch" (January-March), and spike once more right before school is out (May).

Limitations of the Study

The study only included data for the 2014-2015 academic school year. This limited the study because the teacher-researcher did not have a baseline for which to compare the data that was collected.

The teacher-researcher did not have access to the details of each incident that led to student being assigned ISS. The details of the incident were limited to the behavior code attached via Powerschool to each ISS assignment. This left the teacher-researcher dependent upon the assigned administrator of the student and how they decided to interpret the discipline infraction. It does not give a truly clear picture as to "why" ISS

was chosen as the preferred method of discipline. In some cases this is because the student receives special services and the amount of out of school (OSS) suspensions is limited without certain procedures.

The data collected does not account for certain changes in demographics or physical location such as a student moving from the regular education program to the special education program or vice versa. Not having this information could have possibly skewed the data.

If someone desired to replicate this study it is recommended that the researcher collect data from a 3-year span as opposed to 1 calendar school year. A three-year span would allow the researcher to establish a baseline and truly see if there are in fact reductions in negative behaviors. The researcher would also need access to more detailed information like discipline referrals so that conclusions can be drawn on a stronger foundation.

Recommendations for Action

For secondary administrators it is recommended that possible other methods of discipline should be considered. These disciplinary measures should be proactive and focused on students who lie within the demographics most likely to be assigned ISS. Service learning and character education programs are possibilities to consider as well. If eradicating the ISS program is not an option it is recommended that the program should be altered to be more “arduous” and “challenging” so that it does not serve as a “holding room” for students with discipline infractions. It is the hope of the teacher-researcher that the state department of education and its constituencies would consider lobbying for

funds to incorporate a certified teacher to facilitate a character education or service learning program.

Recommendations for Further Study

It is recommended that this study or similar studies be conducted at the High school level. This would provide insight to the research questions of this study at a higher level of education.

Future studies should include more areas of study to research. More Data should be collected for multiple demographics such as race, geography of the school (inner city or rural), grades, and students who are receiving free and reduced lunch.

It is also recommended that future research should include a longitudinal study with one group as they progress through the middle level or secondary level grades. The study should also be expanded to multiple middle and high schools as well.

Overall Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable information and perspective for teachers and administration. It provides an eye opening picture into one of the most commonly used forms of discipline in middle and high schools across the nation.

The study sheds light on how effective the use of ISS as a disciplinary measure is. For teachers it helps to establish expectations for how some students will react to the ISS assignment.

The study also shows some of the consistent patterns and trends with middle school students. In the study certain demographics were shown to me more likely than

others to be assigned ISS. Certain patterns were revealed in the assignments during particular months of the school year. Teachers and administrators can take advantage of the information provided in the study by considering it when assessing their professional development needs. Teachers, administrators, and district officials can consider this information when revising and developing their discipline guidelines.

Appendix A: Approved Research Proposal

Research Proposal

Candidate: Leron M. Rahynes

Date: 1/28/15

Site: Gable Middle School

Topic: Whether or not In School Suspensions (ISS) is effective in reducing student behavioral problems.

Problem Statement:

As a practicing professional educator for the past five years the teacher-researcher has observed an overwhelming amount of recidivism in In School Suspension (ISS). This could lead one to believe that ISS is not an effective measure to curtail negative behavior.

Significance of the study:

ISS is a disciplinary measure that costs time, money, and student seat-time. Determining the effectiveness of ISS will help determine whether it is needs to continue to be used or should a more cost-effective and academia friendly measure be sought out.

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of ISS as a disciplinary measure to reduce negative student behaviors in the middle school environment.

Hypothesis:

It is the hypothesis of the teacher-researcher that the data gathered from this research study will show that ISS is not an effective measure to reduce recidivism or the occurrences of negative behavior.

Research Questions:

Is ISS, in its current design a viable and effective method to reduce negative student behaviors?

Is there a positive correlation between the number of negative behaviors of certain students and the assigning of ISS?

Does the use of ISS as a disciplinary measure reduce the occurrence of negative behaviors of students?

Proposed Research Design:

Correlational Design

Rationale for Proposed Research Design:

The teacher-researcher has chosen a correlational design for research because the relationship of the two variables being studied without any attempt to influence them. The variables are not being manipulated in any way, shape, or form. This research design is best for casual-comparative research or *associational research.*

Proposed Title:

Suspending In School Suspension? : Is ISS a valid means of disciplinary action to reduce negative student behaviors?

Research Proposal is approved. Proceed as planned.

R. Keith East, Instructor

Feb. 11, 2015

Reference:

Achilles, G. M., McLaughlin, M. J., & Croninger, R. G. (2007). Sociocultural correlates of disciplinary exclusion among students with emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities in the SEELS National database. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 15*, 33–45.

Allman, K., & Slate, J. (2011). School discipline in public education: A brief review of current practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 6*(2). Retrieved March 11, 2015, from ERIC Institute of Education Sciences.

American Psychological Association, Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. *American Psychologist, 63*(9), 852–862. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ824556

Amuso, J. G. (2007). The occurrence of student absenteeism from the regular school setting and student achievement on the seventh grade mathematics Mississippi curriculum test (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3300838)

Burke, A., & Nishioka, V. (2014). *Suspension and expulsion patterns in six Oregon school districts* (REL 2014–028). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools. (1992). Keeping children in school: Sounding the alarm on suspensions. Oakland, CA: Urban Strategies Council.

Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Achilles, G. M. (2006). Suspension, race, and disability: Analysis of statewide practices and reporting. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Dis- orders, 14*(4), 217–226. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ766658

Lee, T., Cornell, D., Gregory, A., & Fan, X. (2011). High suspension schools and dropout rates for black and white students. *Education and Treatment of Children, 34*(2), 167–192. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ920359

Losen, D. J., & Martinez, T. (2013). *Out of school & off track: The use of suspensions in American middle and high schools*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles, Civil Rights Project, Center for Civil Rights Remedies. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED541731

Moore (Benoît), A. J. (2014). Policy in practice: Enabling and inhibiting factors for the success of suspension centres. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(11). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n11.7

Morris, R. C., & Howard, A. C. (2003). Designing an effective in-school suspension program. Clearing House, 76, 156-159. doi: 10.1080/0098650309601994

Morrison, G. M., & Skiba, R. (2001). Promises and perils. psychology in the schools, 38, 173-184. doi:10.1002/pits.1008

Nocera, E. (n.d.). Impact of school-wide positive behavior supports on student sehavior in the middle grades. *Research in Middle Level Education, 37*(8). Retrieved March 10, 2014, from ERIC Institute of Educational Sciences.

Pfleger, R. & Wiley, K. (2012). *Colorado disciplinary practices, 2008-2010: Disciplinary actions, student behaviors, race, and gender.* Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved [date] from http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/colorado-disciplinary-practices.

Sauter, B. (2001). Rethinking the effectiveness of suspensions. Reclaiming Children and Youth, 9, 210-217.

Skiba, R. J. (2002). Special education and school discipline: A precarious balance. behavioral disorders, 27, 81-97

Skiba, R. (2000). Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice (Policy Research Report #SRS2). Bloomington, IN: Indiana Education Policy Center.

Skiba, R. (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. American Psychologist*, 63*, 852–862.

Wanjura, C. (2000, December). Teacher perceptions regarding the inclusion of children with behavioural and emotional disorders in their classrooms. Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney, Australia. Retrieved from http://www.aare.edu.au/00pap/wan00469.htm