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What'S Going On? The Disproportionate Discipline of Upper Elementary Male Students in Little Tiger Elementary School

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WHAT'S GOING ON? THE DISPROPORTIONATE DISCIPLINE OF UPPER
ELEMENTARY MALE STUDENTS IN LITTLE TIGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This action research study investigates the problem of disproportionate male discipline at LTES, specifically through the implementation of the PBIS program. Both quantitative and qualitative data provide a thorough explanation of student misbehaviors and discipline reporting practices at LTES. Through the utilization of teacher surveys, interviews, descriptive statistics, and anecdotal notes, the researcher presents findings which provide hope for improving male student behavior and discipline reporting practices. The study focuses on answering the overarching question, did the action plan result in a 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation? To answer this question a school leadership team was formed, teacher surveys and teacher interviews were conducted, a focus group meeting was held, classroom observations were conducted, and target year discipline data was collected. Findings revealed no statistically significant difference in male discipline data after PBIS program implementation. Qualitative findings reveal promising suggestions for further study. Male students have a greater chance of success in the educational environment when male mentors are provided as support. Teacher training in behavior management, building relationships, and cultural understanding is essential in male student success. Lastly, extracurricular activities provide male students with the opportunity to create a more positive school culture and experience.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my heart and soul, Joseph Michael. When I think of why I do what I do, why this work weighs so heavily on my heart, and why I persist, it's because of him. With the help of my mother, Brenda, the encouragement of my brother, Jamie, and the inspiration of my sister, Marie, I have been able to persevere through some of the toughest times of this study. To my professors and cohort, I say thank you for making this process worth the time spent away from our families. Iron will always sharpen iron.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

      Are schools set up for the educational success of male students? When a male student walks into a classroom to be educated, inspired, and enlightened, do they get the same opportunity to express themselves comfortably without the fear of judgment, or persecution as a female student would? If a male student comes to school with a limited history of proper behavior, will he be taught appropriate behavior instead of being condemned? Are teachers responsible for teaching male students what is and is not appropriate behavior at school? If the answers to these questions are yes, then why are male students disproportionately more disciplined in schools compared to female students? Why are phrases such as pipeline-to-prison and gender inequality being addressed so frequently in research? While both male and female students share in behavior problems such as inattention during instruction, regulating their emotions, and difficulty forming positive relationships with their teachers and peers, male students are more likely to be disciplined for this type of behavior.

Description of the Problem

      The central area of concern in this applied research project is the disproportionate discipline referrals of male students at Little Tiger Elementary School (LTES). LTES' discipline referrals have amassed over 1,300 for two consecutive years. This study reveals male students

represent a disproportionate amount of those referrals with over 70% representation. What follows is a description of the current condition of LTES, reasons why discipline policies should be reviewed and addressed, and a description of those who will be most affected by this study. According to the American Sociological Association (2016), the way schools respond to boys' behaviors plays a significant role in shaping their educational outcomes years later. The disproportionate response of schools towards male student misbehavior in education serves to create inequalities among male and female students causing a gender gap. This gap places male students significantly behind female students in both discipline and achievement. Relative to other early childhood family and health factors considered, gender differences in both students' behavior and educators' responses to behavior problems explained more than half (59.4%) of the gender gap in schooling completed among adults. LTES educates students in grades four and five. Of the approximately 600 students being served, about 86.3% qualify for free or reduced lunch. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) found that poor children suffer from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently than do non-poor children. These behavior problems most commonly display themselves through externalizing behaviors such as aggression, fighting, and acting out. When this of behavior is displayed in a school or classroom setting, the behavior is appropriately dealt with as disruptions to the learning environment. Students are then assigned consequences for this behavior, as it is a hindrance to the educational process.

LTES serves both fourth and fifth-grade public students. An assistant principal's role is primarily to receive and process discipline referrals. The North Mississippi community – in which LTES is located – is mainly comprised of a low-income and moderately educated population. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2016), the city consists of around 7,500 people. This population includes a disproportionate number of small children and teenagers per

household. (Start Class, 2017). The unemployment rate is around 5.3%. LTES is one of six schools which comprise the Little Tiger School District. This school district has a rich history of athletic achievement and community pride. The community thrives in a rich athletic heritage and support for Big Tiger High School Tigers who have won a total of 11 football state championship titles since 1993.

The Little Tiger School District serves the community of Little Tiger, Mississippi. Students from five smaller towns are also served within the district. According to the 2016 Mississippi Department of Education Accountability Rating System, the school district is rated a "D." The number of students served is about 4,700 students in grades Kindergarten through twelve. There are six schools within the school district; one elementary school for Pre-Kindergarten through first grades, one intermediate school for second through third grade, one middle school for grades four and five, a junior high school which serves grades six through eight, and a high school containing ninth through twelfth-grade students. The district also has two alternative schools; one for K-5 students and one for students in grades six through twelve. The Child Development Center functions to serve students with severe and profound learning and physical disabilities. The district's Even Start Program for children ages 3-7 and their parents offers a pre-school startup education. There are over 300 certified teachers in the school district, 55 of which are Nationally Board Certified.

The LTES building was constructed in 1973. LTES houses 595 students with 274 students located in fourth-grade and 321 students in fifth-grade. The African-American student population makes up approximately 60.3% of the school, with 49.1% female, and 50.1% male students. LTES has 24 certified classroom teachers, three certified inclusion teachers, four special-area teachers, one counselor, and four non-certified staff members. Within the school, the

teachers who are in their first or second year of teaching are averaged at seven percent. The student to teacher ratio is excessively high at 25:1. Ninety-four percent of teachers have missed ten or more days from school. Teachers collaborate twice per week to address student academic needs, deficits, and enrichment. Teachers are randomly selected to serve on a Booster Club, Superintendent's Advisory, gifted and school leadership teams.

The United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2014) collected data from every school district within the country. Among their findings, it was revealed male students are three times more likely than female students to be expelled from school, three times more likely to obtain multiple suspensions, and two times more likely to obtain In-School Detention or at least one school suspension. While a direct link to specific causes is not reported, a picture of the practices and commonalities within school districts across the country when addressing behavior is created.

The primary role of receiving and processing discipline referrals is held by the assistant principal. Since 2015, a steady stream of discipline referrals ranging from minor to severe disruptive behaviors consumes most of the day. Within two years, a trend of the mostly female teacher population referring male students for both minor and major instances at higher rates than female students have become increasingly more prevalent. While female students do receive discipline referrals, they are primarily referred for major disruptions. During a recent teacher advisory meeting, teachers expressed concerns of the growing instances of student misbehavior within the school. They feel frustrated with the lack of power which they must correct the problem behavior, as well as the lack of support from parents and administration.

Teacher frustration is translated into numbers when viewing the discipline reports of LTES. Data regarding the number of students who received office referrals for various reasons

have gained the attention of school district leaders across the country. As logged in the Student Administrator Manager Software system (2015) the school district uses, as of March 2017, LTES has accumulated a total of 1142 major and minor discipline infractions. Male students account for 79% of all minor discipline referrals, while females only account for 21%. Of the major referrals, male students account for 77% of all infractions and females account for 23%. To further describe this issue, the disciplinary actions of male students are disproportionately issued. Based on Start Class by Graphic (2017), 280 male students represented, 3.9% received corporal punishment compared to less than one percent of female students. Twenty-six percent of male students received the disciplinary action of being placed in isolation, away from the regular classroom setting, while only 15% of female students received this consequence. Out-of-school suspensions in which students were removed or not allowed into the educational environment for a specific amount of days accounted for 8.6% of males and 4.8% of female students receiving this consequence.

As it relates to disciplinary actions, the retention rates of those receiving isolation or harsh consequences have a direct effect on the number of student retained or who receive low performing scores on standardized state tests. Of the students tested, females have a higher passing rate at 37% in both English-Language Arts and Math, compared to 27% of male students in both subjects. Female students in school perform higher than the state average and the male students perform lower.

Justification of the Problem

The high rate of male students who are disciplined for both minor and major infractions further reinforces the negative outlook the community and parents have in which the school is deemed not only unsafe but also unfair. The high rates of discipline also impact the teacher

outlook in which they feel frustrated with the demands of teaching the current curriculum and dealing with disruptive behaviors. Teacher frustration is related to the increasing yet unaddressed behavior problem within the building. The disruptive behaviors also have an indirect impact on the academic success as well as on individual student success. By addressing this growing problem in the school, more focus can be placed on the academic achievement of LTES.

The issue of numerous office referrals and suspensions prompt school leaders to analyze disciplinary data to develop intervention strategies to decrease the number of disciplinary occurrences (Davis, 2008). As novice and veteran teachers enter their classrooms each year, they have the best of intentions in ensuring the education of those they serve. The recipients of this education at LTES are between the ages of nine and 12 years old. The relationship between the teacher and student is critical to the overall success of each student. When a child feels valued and loved, they are more likely to rise to the expectations set and less likely to become defiant or disrespectful.

During the 2014-2015 school year (SY), there were 1,867 total discipline referrals. The following year during the 2015-2016 SY the discipline referrals totaled approximately 1,357 major and minor infractions. Though there was a decrease of 510 referrals, this is still considered a significant amount and the decrease was not substantial enough to show improvement. To address this issue, the Little Tiger School District revised its approach to the excessive discipline referrals of male students. The school district created a discipline ladder, in conjunction with other school districts with similar demographics, to provide a more fair and equitable approach in dealing with student misbehavior.

Assistant principals from each building within the district met monthly with district office administration to provide feedback. We would also meet to ensure full implementation of the

discipline ladder. Teacher interventions were required when referring students who had committed minor infractions. The intervention requirement was put in place to ensure teachers were making efforts to redirect student misbehavior and soliciting the assistance of the parents or guardians. The interventions included parent contact on the first infraction, parent contact along with a documented research-based classroom intervention (provided to the teacher by the counselor or assistant principal) on the second infraction, and an office referral which included parent contact with an administrative warning on the third infraction. Although this process addresses the issue of fair and equitable consequences in discipline and provides the teachers with two opportunities to resolve minor classroom disruptions, it does not address the repetitive discipline referrals received for the male student body, escalated incidents (minor to major infractions), teacher-student relationships, or classroom management issues.

Of the 314 discipline referrals received between the months of August and October the 2016-2017 SY, 237 or 74% of those infractions were committed by male students. This creates a distinct problem as it pertains to instructional time, student engagement and motivation for school, and teacher-student relationships. According to a mixed methods study conducted by Luke-Farrer (2014), a discrepancy towards male student behaviors was revealed. It showed that male students received harsher consequences than female students. The study also revealed a connection between the discrepancies of discipline distribution and the gaps in academic achievement. This area of concern must be addressed in order to improve overall student achievement.

Audience Significance

When students are disciplined in their educational environment, the effects of the discipline may often cause ripples throughout various areas of the educational environment and

beyond. The individuals who are affected are often identified as the stakeholders or those who are invested in the result and/or cause of the problem which has occurred. In this research area, those stakeholders who are directly or indirectly affected by or contribute to this research are male students, teachers, student population (classmates), administrators, parents, and community leaders. These stakeholders are identified by assessing the cause, intervention outcome, negative or positive impact of improvement, and those invested in the overall outcome or success of the targeted student or students. The stakeholders are accessed through daily interactions, such as phone calls, conferences, interventions, and daily routine interactions.

One significance for the audience in this study is the increased capacity of the male students within the LTES and future community. Male students, who are products of LTES, provide the community with a positive or negative view of the school. The second significance in a study of LTES' excessive discipline referrals of male students is for future improvement of policies and decision making within the school. Providing administrators, teachers, students, and parents with the opportunity to state and address the current discipline policies of LTES create a community in which each party will contribute to the whole success of its students. A third significance for the audience is the inclusion of all stakeholders in a process of solution-oriented means which contribute to the overall growth of the school and community. By the participation of all stakeholders in the process of discovering solutions for a problem that affects everyone, the school does not become isolated from those whom they serve.

Administrators took part in facilitating collaborative committees attended by teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and student representatives. Throughout these meetings, decisions were made and input provided regarding the school's approach to the disparities in discipline of the male students. Teachers and school staff established more positive relationships with the

male students who were the most affected by discipline disparities. A trusting and more

nurturing relationships can be established while still maintaining a safe and orderly classroom

environment. Parents assist in generating ideas to improve school relations with both students

and the community. Parents, who are concerned their children are treated unfairly, begin to see

the school as a partner, rather than an adversary. The male students are the strongest benefactor

throughout this process. By being treated equally and given the same opportunities as female

students to make mistakes without harsh and punitive punishment, they are afforded the

opportunity to have a more positive school experience.

　All stakeholders are included in the process through meaningful conversations, solution-

oriented planning meetings, and a feedback cycle. This cycle serves to continuously monitor

progress, reassess the plan, and implement changes when needed. Through the process of

collaboration, teachers and other staff members take ownership of the discipline concerns and

become empowered through knowledge gained. The school established a continuous cycle of

learning and learn from one another. By establishing strong leadership, empowering teachers,

creating ownership, and creating a cycle of continuous self-monitoring, the school becomes more

of a community in which teachers, parents, and students are working together to achieve

common goals and objectives.

The overall improvement of the decision-making policies school-wide and in the

classroom is essential in addressing the central concern of this study. There are several reasons

this study will benefit overall school success. First, the academic achievement of the male

students is based on what information they retain and are limited in how much of their success is

affected by discipline referrals. When the male students are present in the classroom, it increases

their opportunity become a part of a learning community (Sullivan, Klingbeil, &Van Norman,

2013). Second, since Little Tiger, Mississippi resides in a community of primarily low-income households, the opportunity for students to become incarcerated for various reasons as they get older increases. When male students are disciplined at high rates, it is a strong predictor of similar disparities in the juvenile court referrals (Skiba, Arrendondo, & Rouch, 2014). LTES' discipline approach should reflect that of the community in producing students who become productive and valued citizens. Third, this study intends to extend the research on the discipline disparities of male student behavior responses and consequences. Various studies have been conducted and data collected regarding the disparities in discipline practices of schools, districts, and the United States as a whole. This study provides a clear picture of the practices and policies of LTES and adds to the generalized literature pertaining to the approach to discipline in male students. Lastly, this study seeks to improve overall relationships with male students at LTES (teacher-student referrals, decrease referrals, improve the male student experience at LTES).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this action research study was to address the disproportionate discipline referrals of male students at LTES. The intent of the study was to examine factors influencing the phenomena, identify preventive measures to decrease the number of office referrals received by male students, and improve the overall organizational quality through best practices. To begin this study, a collaborative team of teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, students and an administrator developed an action plan to address the central area of concern. The review of the literature on the disproportionate discipline rates of male students was juxtaposed with the surveys, interviews, LTES student referral data, and collaborative team meetings to understand more clearly how data are used to guide decisions regarding the components of the action plan.

Qualitative data collected from the collaborative leadership team planning meetings, surveys and interviews assisted in garnering perceptions of the community, identify contributing factors, and guide decisions throughout the development of the action plan. The information was collected and analyzed to support the school in making improvements in decreasing the number of referrals received by male students at LTES, revise school policies and procedures regarding how male student misbehavior is addressed and improve the overall organizational quality of LTES. This data was also be used throughout the action plan process.

In conjunction with qualitative data, quantitative data gathered from the Student Administrator Manager Spectra (SAMS) program. This data is utilized daily by LTES's administration. It provides information on the school's discipline referral count, student demographics, reporting teachers, frequency of students receiving referrals, and frequency of teachers reporting. The system also provides administrative report cards, attendance reports, course history, and discipline history. The discipline information collected from the SAMS program provides an accurate count of the number of discipline referrals from term to term. Each term's discipline count compared to each other gives a clear picture of male student misbehavior increasing or decreasing. The quantitative data collected from the SAMS database was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan. Data was collected from both quantitative and qualitative measures. At the end of the school year prior to program implementation, the information was used to develop a complete understanding of the problem, drive decisions regarding policies and procedures, and contribute to the overall efficacy of the organization.

By combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, a clearer picture is presented of all factors related to the unbalanced discipline referrals male students at LTES receive compared to their female counterparts. The central concern of this study was the

excessive discipline referrals of male students at LTES. The action plan developed by the

school's collaborative leadership team with surveys and data collected from the SAMS database

is driving the organization to adjust the policies, procedures, and habits. Results will be

indicated at the conclusion of the study. The outcomes will be used to enhance the organization's

efficacy, improve teacher-student and community relations, improve the school culture of LTES,

and decrease the number of referrals received by male students.

Research Questions

Two sets of research questions are used in this research. The preliminary set of questions

was used to guide the construction of the action plan. Their purpose was to drive the research,

provide the information necessary in the facilitation of the development of the student, and gain

an understanding of the problem of the disproportionate discipline of male students in upper

elementary school. The first question addressed the overarching problem within the organization.

The second question sought to determine potential causes and effects of this disproportionality of

male student discipline within the school system. The third question focused on a collaborative

effort in finding solutions to addressing the problem. The fourth question sought to identify the

strengths of the program implementation. The final questions focus on the correlation of each

implemented program's influence on the discipline results. Following are the research questions

used to guide the evaluation of the action plan:

1. Did the action plan result in a 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within
   the first year of implementation?

2. What limitations and problems impact the implementation of the Positive Behavior
   Interventions and Supports program?

3. To what extent did the certified and non-certified staff participate in the PBIS program?

4. What areas of success came about as a result of the implementation process?

5. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and all male students?

6. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and male students not participating in G.E.M.S.?

The primary goal of this applied study was to decrease the discipline incidents of male student misbehavior within the organization. Chapter Three will contain an action plan which was used as the guide to accomplish that goal. Prior to action plan presentation, this study has focused on improving the capacity of male students as scholars, citizens, and future leaders. As both the strengths and weaknesses of our current program are addressed, adjustments are made throughout the study in order to identify areas of improvement.

Overview of the Study

Chapter One addresses the existing problem of disproportionate discipline of male students within an upper elementary school. It provides the design of the study which outlines the existing problem as well as the effects on school culture and teacher student relationships. Chapter Two presents the existing and relevant research which addressing male student discipline and examines alternatives to punitive punishment and solutions to the issue. Chapter Three provides a description of the development, characteristics, and evaluation of the action plan created to address the problem. Chapter Four presents the research findings of the study. An analysis of the research methods conducted is presented using salient themes. Chapter Five presents an overview and summary as a discussion of the study. The limitations of the study, possible implications, and considerations for future research are also discussed.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current literature cites various reasons why male students lack academic success. It also targets reasons for the disproportionality between male and female discipline in all school systems, in both public and private settings. Those reasons are defined at varying levels and degrees in terms of school structures of school systems or cultural disadvantages. Despite the vast amount of literature available, male students continue to lag behind in the educational setting. Research citations will cover what are perceived to be key factors in determining academic success for males in the school system. This applied research study focuses on the research addressing three central phenomena: (1) high rates of males in discipline; (2) outcomes resulting from the frequent absence of black male students from the educational setting; and (3) factors relating to disciple referrals, such as teacher-student relationships, teacher empathy towards the various deficits of male students, and student engagement in the classroom environment. Several quantitative and qualitative dissertations and various publications addressing these topics are used. The information collected informs this study in regard to school policy, possible solutions, and best practices in male student discipline.

Data regarding the number of students who received office referrals for various reasons have gained the attention of school district leaders across the country. A limited number of

studies have explored the effects of specific school-and-student-level characteristics on the use of more severe student discipline (Welch and Payne, 2010). It is widely acknowledged that western schools, public American schools in particular, are using punitive punishments as a means to define and manage student misbehavior. Restrictive school policies which promote assimilation and conformity set the tone for control over the student body. The issue of numerous office referrals and suspensions prompt school leaders to analyze disciplinary data to develop intervention strategies to decrease the number of disciplinary occurrences (Davis, 2008). In effect, the central phenomenon of low academic achievement and the high discipline rate of males was explored in this study. Since male students are frequently removed from the classroom at multiple points during the school year, this phenomenon continues to have an adverse effect on student achievement. Though studies have been conducted for decades regarding this issue, the common practice of harsh discipline towards the male student continues to affect their academic progress.

Gender Discipline Disproportionality

There has been a surge of research over the past two decades regarding the discipline, perception of, and the overall educational experiences of males in American public-school systems. Discussions and research regarding the over-representation of male students in special education programs, alternative schools, in-school detention, and out-of-school suspensions have been at the forefront of educational discussions in dealing with misbehaviors at school.

Lukefahr-Farrer (2014) conducted a mixed methods study which analyzed and determined if gender discrepancies exist in the discipline of middle school students among upcoming administrators, current administrators, and teachers. The study used the blind survey results of 150 aspiring and practicing administrators and teachers. Qualitative data results

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revealed a discrepancy towards male students' behaviors. Quantitative data from the researched school district's archival data also showed that male students within the district received much more discipline and harsher consequences than female middle school students. The discrepancies have not only caused gaps in discipline distribution, but also in academic achievement.

Sadker and Sadker (1984) conducted a three-year research and development project to gain more knowledge about sex-equity in classroom teacher-student interactions and to reduce or eliminate sex-bias in the natural classroom setting. One hundred and two classrooms of fourth through sixth-grade students within six school districts were studied. Classrooms were observed for 45 seven-minute periods of active interaction by observers using the Sex Equity in Classroom Teaching Observation System. Initial analysis of the observational data was relegated to the nature of interaction patterns and the distribution of interaction between male and female students. Secondarily, differences in teacher interaction with boys and girls across treatment groups were examined. The authors determined there was a statistical difference in the interactions between boys and girls across all treatment groups. Boys received more attention from the teacher whether in terms of praise and criticism. Teacher disapproval of male misbehavior was more likely to be met with more harsh reprimands than girls. Boys are three times more likely to be reprimanded than girls when dealing with aggressive behavior.

Males are not only more likely to obtain more harsh punishment in schools, but in their homes as well. Parent et.al (2011) conducted a study to examine the combined effects of individual, joint, and interactive associations of permissive and harsh punishments among female and male students. This study examined the individual, unique, and interactive relation of harsh and permissive discipline with child disruptive behavior for at-risk boys and girls separately. One hundred and sixty parent participants whose children were aged three to six were chosen. The

study found that both boys and girls received harsh discipline from parents when displaying disruptive behavior, while boys were most commonly met with permissive discipline practices when displaying inappropriate behavior. It was found that the boys who received permissive discipline from parents often displayed significantly more disruptive behaviors. The findings of this study also suggest that harsh discipline practices are detrimental to both boys and girls. Permissive discipline is more detrimental to males. When male children display inappropriate behaviors in the home setting without consistent correction, they view these as acceptable behaviors. Male students who are then subjected to the rules and procedures of a structured and organized environment have a more difficult time adjusting than female students.

Gray (2016) conducted a three-year ethnographic study of a high school discipline team. The study addressed various theories the researcher proposed to lead to the main decision making of the team. School law enforcement officers and educators' rationale for discipline decision making was examined. The researcher determined that while the intentions of school educators and school law enforcement were to reduce current disparities among students with behavior issues, there was a lack of urgency, a creation of "new rules" for Latino and white students, as well as a discomfort when dealing with race and gender discipline disparities. The discipline team adopted the notion which indicated all students should be treated equally. The intention of the discipline team was not to impede the further progress of the improvement of student misbehavior, but rather placed a stronger focus on the entire group rather than a singular subgroup.

Elementary to Middle School Transition

As males mature towards adulthood, they face universal stereotypes. Black male students, in particular, are viewed as uneducable and criminal. These psychological messages burden the

black male students and influence how they are educated and disciplined both in and out of school. The American Psychological Association (2014) presented the findings of a study which examined whether Black boys are given the protections of childhood equally to their peers. This study was a combination of three reported experiments. One hundred twenty-three students from a large public university participated in this study. Ninety-six percent (128) were female. The median age of participants was 19. When asked to report racial demographics, 111 stated white, four stated black, and eight reported other. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three between-subjects conditions. They were asked to report the perceived innocence of white children, black children, or children generally (i.e., without race specified). From ages zero to nine, children were viewed as equally innocent regardless of their race. However, participants perceptions of innocence began to deviate at age 10. At this point, the participants began to view black children as significantly less innocent than other children within every age group, starting at the age of 10. After the age of 10, the black children were perceived as equal to or less than equally innocent than non-black children in the next oldest cohort. Black children were viewed as older by 4.5 years. In other words, the perceived innocence of black children from ages 10-13 were equivalent to that of non-black children ages 14-17, and the perceived innocence of black children ages 14-17 was equivalent to non-black adults from ages 18-21. The authors provide preliminary evidence that black children are more likely to be seen as adults prematurely.

In the second study, participants were asked to make evaluations within a criminal justice context, to examine whether perceptions of innocence were different by target race and the severity of crimes committed. Fifty-nine students from a large public university participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Fifty-eight percent (34) were female. The median age of participants was 19. When asked to report racial demographics, 53 reported white, one reported

black, two responded Latino, and four reported other. Participants were randomly assigned to a category of two (crime type: misdemeanor vs. felony). Additionally a category of three (race of target: White vs. Black vs. Latino) mixed-model design. The study concluded black felony suspects were viewed as 4.53 years older than what they were. This could mean boys would be misperceived as legal adults at about the age of 13 and a half. This racial disparity seems to be related to implicit dehumanization of blacks. The more participants implicitly associated blacks and apes, the greater the age overestimation and perceived culpability of black children.

The third and final experiment of the study tested 176 police officers. Sixty police officers from a large urban police department participated in this study. The sample was comprised of seven percent (4) female, with a median age of 38, and a median time on the police force of 6.5 years. Forty-four identified as white, six reported black, eight responded Latino, and two reported other. Participants were randomly assigned to a two rows- by- three column mixed model design. The two rows represented crime type (misdemeanor vs. felony). Th three columns contained race information (White vs. Black vs. Latino). The observed associations between dehumanization and violent outcomes for black children provide further support for the hypothesis that black children are prematurely treated as adults. The implicit dehumanization of black children predicted the extent to which police officers will overestimate the age of black suspects, how culpable those Black suspects are perceived to be, and the extent to which officers were more likely to use force on Black suspects than suspects of other races throughout their career, controlling for how much suspects resist arrest or are located in high-crime areas (Goff, Jackson, Lewis Di Leone, Cullota, and DiTomasso, 2014). Black boys are more likely, during the transitional periods of their lives, to be perceived as older than their true age.

Mundy (2014) further explains this concept in a mixed-methods study. This explains the behavior transition among black male students which occurs between elementary and middle schools. It was determined that black male students received significantly more referrals than white male students. The study sought to address the underlying factors that caused this discrepancy between black and white male students. Changes in the students' worldview and changes in interactions with teachers were among themes discovered during the study. The teacher student dynamic, how they view and react to one another, is a factor which arises during this time. Also, changes in their school environment, reactions to peer influence, and changes in their home/school environments were among the themes that emerged as a result of respondents' interview questions. The discovered themes may have significant effects on male student behavior and academic performance.

Welch and Payne (2010) further this notion in their quantitative study by presenting a set of five hypotheses. The first set of hypotheses pertain to punitive disciplinary responses: schools with a higher proportion of black students are more likely to (1) use punitive controls, such as detention and suspension; (2) implement zero tolerance policies; and (3) use extreme punitive controls, such as expulsion and calling the police. More moderate practices were also tested within this study. The following hypothesis reflect restorative disciplinary practices by assuming schools with a higher proportion of black students are less likely to (4) use mild controls; such as parent-teacher conference and counselor referrals; and (5) implement restitutive practices, like community service. By using a national sample of 294 public non-alternative middle and high schools, the researchers administered principal, teacher, and student questionnaires. Correlations in the responses from each respondent were analyzed. The findings of the research support the racial threat in school settings. Black students are more like to receive punitive punishments than

receive interventions as a proactive or empathic measure. If they are not viewed as children with childhood innocence but are perceived as older, criminal, and assumed to be guilty, then punitive punishments are used as instruments of control over student misbehavior.

Leadership Roles

Discipline is a vital part of school life at any stage. Learning and teaching are made possible when school and the classroom have a maintained safe and orderly environment. Wyk and Pesler (2014) study the resources required to achieve this goal. Twenty-seven honors students were interviewed using an open-ended questionnaire. Six students were selected for a purposeful sample. The findings of the study show participants demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of maintaining good discipline policies and ensuring proper implementation. The findings also show the respondents perception of school leaders playing an essential role in guiding, controlling, and advising in the process of regulating school discipline. A principal participant revealed the importance of "buy-in" from parents, staff, and community members in policy matters. It was also made clear from the study, school leader's role in providing effective training for staff members and parents in addressing student misconduct.

A different study finds school principals of elementary school must ensure teachers are prepared to positively handle discipline issues of children. School-wide discipline policies are recommended for school leadership implementation which are appropriate with children's ages and behavior. Alsubaie (2015) presents a compilation of studies which reinforce the assumption of school leadership and positive behavior reinforcement as effective in decreasing student misbehavior. Alsubaie recommends educational training programs which will teach principals and teachers how to effectively handle classroom behavior problems. It is also recommended

teachers connect with and communicate with parents to develop the best solutions for handling classroom misbehaviors of elementary aged children.

One such strategy introduced by Desiderio and Mullennix (2005) is Assertive Discipline. Assertive Discipline is a classroom management technique where both punitive and permissive techniques were used to address misbehaviors. Both novice and preservice teachers with training in Assertive Discipline techniques were studied. There was a concern among mentor teachers that students would not become more disruptive if the preservice and mentor teacher used different discipline techniques. Desiderio and Mullennix (2005) created a case study using one first-year teacher and 18 students from a rural elementary school. Seventeen students were of European descent and one student was of Mexican-American descent. The gender makeup of the classroom was 10 boys and eight girls. Although results from the case study cannot be generalized, the researchers found the Assertive Discipline plan that was implemented by the first year to be very effective. Within the Assertive Discipline plan, the teacher is in charge. Students are viewed as collaborators and not adversaries. The students are a part of creating the classroom culture and the teacher, in turn, reinforces the culture. Classroom rules are clear and concise, leaving no guesswork for the student. Assertive teachers also react quickly and purposely to classroom disruptions leaving a fair and appropriate approach to all student misbehaviors. The conclusion was when discipline management plans for the classroom are effectively communicated, prepared, and implemented; students will know what is expected of them and be able to follow the discipline management style of the teacher.

Other studies conducted to address concerns regarding student-teacher relationships related to the discipline of males. Popular views of life are connected to threatening images of males with predictable regularity. Williams' (2008) study examined the relationship between the

student and the teacher, specifically the relationship between white teachers and black male students, parents, and their community. The study examined how those relationships affect student achievement, teaching practices, and the people involved (including teachers). This qualitative study focused on an "inner city" school with a 97.1% minority population. The population was taken from a school that was 100% Title I. Twenty-six white teachers that made up 72% population of the teachers with more than three years of teaching experience were selected. Teachers as participants shared their stories, perspectives, and feelings; manifestations of their individual and collective racial identity status emerged. Teachers liberally used disclaimers, avoidance techniques, colorblindness, and stereotypes, and spontaneously shared their *outsider* feelings, as outcomes of their thinking around race throughout the focus group discussions (Williams, 2008). Findings from the study included both caring relationships from teachers towards their students, as well as deficit thinking. Stereotypes towards boys, minorities affected the teachers' ability to interact with parents, maintain classroom management, and implement effective instruction. The researcher incorporated the culturally responsive theory which aided teachers in gaining a clearer understanding of how each participant played a vital role in the American educational society. Findings from the study indicate an inherent need for teachers to save those students they deem deficit in their life or societal disposition. By becoming more culturally aware, teachers were able to meet students' needs by deeming them handicapped or in need of a savior.

A critical examination of a teacher's role in self-fulfilling prophecy is addressed by Tauber (1998) in order to determine how a teacher's expectations influence a student's performance both academically and behaviorally. Tauber (1998) describes how a teacher's role in a student's educational life is critical to determine success or failure. To demonstrate, the

author lists descriptors of various kinds of people. By listing first thoughts of the Republican

student, overweight teenager, and the only child from an affluent family, Tauber demonstrates

despite best efforts, implications about how a student is perceived can have lasting behavioral

and academic consequences. If a teacher believes in a student's potential as a leader, then the

teacher will provide opportunities for that student to lead. The same is true for those students

whom the teacher has little expectations. If a student has been labeled a troublemaker, then the

treatment of that student will, in effect, create opportunities in which this prediction will come

true.

Black Male Discipline

Both media and scholarly portrayal of contemporary black life often highlight cultures of

violence, drugs, anti-authoritarianism, and other social deficiencies (Monroe, 2005). When males

are viewed as violent and non-compliant, teacher perceptions may be affected prior to the student

entering the classroom. Ferguson (2003) stated that perhaps the behaviors of both teachers and

students are affected by the combination of the student's race and the teacher's perception of

performance. When there is a perception that a person is violent or criminal, there is a possibility

that the expectations for the individual will be lowered as well. Teachers may not explicitly

connect with their disciplinary reactions to negative perceptions of black males, yet systematic

trends in disproportionality suggest teachers may be implicitly guided by stereotypical

perceptions that boys require greater control than their female counterparts.

A qualitative study looked at which students were identified as instigators, participants,

and the offenders in classroom disruptions. By identifying each, Butler, Joubert, and Lewis

(1998) are making the distinction of the root cause of the origin of class disruptions. Data for this

study was collected from primarily African American students from an urban school district in a

Midwestern school district during the 2005-2006 SY. The first goal of the research was to improve the academic success of African American male students. The second goal was to determine if African American male students were discipline disproportionately more than other students. The study concluded that Hispanic male students are most often cited for disruptive behavior, but there is a perception that African American male students hold that position. The research contends that due to the complacency and non-acknowledgment of the disparities within discipline practices, the gap continues to widen. The authors contend that equity audits are not only needed but necessary. They also suggest further studies should be conducted to compare the frequency of referrals and academic outcomes.

Monroe (2005) takes a critical look at male student discipline as it relates specifically to black males. This piece of research deals with the criminalization of black males through media and other sources that shape the views of who they are as individuals. Teachers who are specifically located in low-income, rural, and urban areas, tend to attempt to control male student behaviors rather than address the behavior. This is most pronounced when in areas with students with low-ability levels and male students. Quantitative studies researched for this article state that black male students are two to five times more likely to be suspended from school. Qualitative studies show that corrective punishments for black male students are more likely to be administered than to their white counterparts who display the same misbehavior. Monroe (2005) offers solutions which suggest: (1) interrogation of teacher to beliefs about black male students; (2) incorporation and value of culturally responsive discipline strategies; (3) broadening the discourse in school disciplinary decisions; and (4) maintaining the interest of learners throughout an engaging lesson.

Fenning and Rose (2007) examined various ethnographic, qualitative and qualitative research studies that address the overrepresentation of minority students, particularly African American males, and the direct link to exclusionary discipline practices and prison. This journal article reviews interview data from teachers as well as presented school discipline data in order to recommend three suggestions for schools hoping to improve the disproportionate discipline of male students.

Loss of Instructional Time

Many studies conducted analyze the amount of instructional time lost when dealing with classroom disruptions. Student engagement is determined the various levels at which a student participates with the teacher, with the subject matter, and within the school itself. When students are intellectually immersed in learning tasks they are less likely to engage in behaviors that detract from the instruction at hand (Monroe, 2005). Boyd (2012) addresses school discipline, focusing on the knowledge of school discipline among teachers and school administrators, and identifying five myths that encumber a clear understanding of the issue of school discipline. Boyd (2012) addresses the role of teachers' instruction and its ability to engage students for effective classroom management, teachers' ability to maintain positive teacher-student relationships after moments of discipline, and the school leader's role in providing support for disciplinary action. The impact of school codes of conduct on school discipline is also discussed.

Classroom negative behavior interferes with instruction and causes teachers to spend valuable instructional time trying to re-engage students (Davis, 2008). However, some classroom disruptive behaviors are only resolved by office referrals, resulting in disciplinary actions in the form of out-of-school or in-school suspensions. Black male students are three times more likely than any other subgroup to be singled out for disciplinary actions. The findings mean they are at

greater risk of being placed in In-School Detention, the alternative school setting or become

suspended from school for extended periods of time. Every day of suspension from school is a

lost day of valuable instructional time (Davis, 2008). The degree to which a student learns is

often determined by the amount of time spent in the classroom with the teacher. The amount of

time a student needs to learn a subject requires a relationship with the teacher in which their

individual needs are determined and met. The phenomenon of the high frequency in which black

male students are removed from the academic setting due to behavior issues puts them at a great

academic disadvantage. Instructional time alone is not a determining factor in student success,

but the use of effective instructional time remains a key contributor. While a student being out of

the classroom for one infraction or discipline occurrence may not have negative effects on their

overall academic performance, this study will address the belief that if that same student is being

removed from the classroom setting on multiple occasions throughout the school year, that

students chances of high academic achievement dwindle

Alternatives to Punitive Punishment

Appropriate Models. Billingsley, Crosby, Evans, and Livingston (2015) writes that

when teaching African American children, there should be an emphasis on caring. Hamlet (2012)

found that many teachers were successful with their male students if they understood, bonded,

used encouragement, and supported the male students as well as used life skills in their efforts to

help them be successful. The literature suggests that the male students' perceptions of the teacher

were not a factor in their overall success. However, the study did offer determinates in academic

success related to the students' need to be understood by the teacher. Students wanted their

teachers to see them as multi-dimensional, with complicated lives, as a person who had a child to

take care of and lived on their own (Hamlet, 2012). Male students are more likely to come from

broken homes and attend under-sourced and underperforming schools. They are less likely to assimilate into the school culture due to the stark differences in their home environment. Many teachers experience defiance when working with African American males (Hamlet, 2012). When teacher's experience defiance or opposition in the educational setting, this is often due to a conflict of the perception of a situation. The student is seeking to be understood, the teacher is seeking to gain control of the student's behavior.

The empathetic approach is reinforced in Anderson's (2007) study which examined the effects of mentoring on standardized achievement scores. The intended focus group of the study were black males in elementary and middle schools. Over a three-year period, standardized test scores from black male students in third through eighth grade were examined. Results of the study show mentoring can positively influence standardized test results. Other factors, such as socioeconomic status and special education disabilities impact student achievement. Mentoring can improve standardized test scores, but remedial services and intervention programs for students with disabilities and those who receive free and reduced lunch provide additional needed supports. Mentoring alone does not have a significant positive impact on test scores.

The Educational Testing Services (ETS) Company conducted a symposium of professional school leaders, lead researchers, university professors, and community outreach directors aimed to improve the school lives of black boys. The symposium reinforced the essential drop in black male student performance and behavior during the ages of nine to thirteen. Along with physical and emotional changes, black boys must face negative stereotypes, self-esteem issues, negative attitudes towards them, and disproportionate and harsh discipline practices. Negative stereotyping hurts the self-esteem of black boys also influence teachers who absorb cultural messages telling them that black boys are violent, apathetic about education, or

incapable of learning (Yaffe, 2012). Black boys are also being overly taught to negotiate potentially dangerous situations with authorities by their parents. They are taught less in regard to cultural and self-pride, lessons which girls more fully realize during this time. Among the more prominent suggestions from the panel was mentor and role model participation. Though black male teachers only represent a low percentage of the teaching work force, caring and competent, highly qualified teachers, no matter their gender, race, will have a profound effect on the outcomes of black males. Talented individuals who are invested in the success of black male students attribute to their long term success as students and future adults.

Elementary School Mentoring. Karcher (2008) conducted a study of predominately Latino male students to examine the effect of offering youth school-based mentoring (SBM), among other school-based support services. From a sample size of 525 predominately Latino students between the ages of 10 and 18 across 19 schools in a large Southwestern area, the students participated in a multicomponent, school-based intervention program run by a youth development agency were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) supportive services alone or (2) supportive services plus SBM. The participants were nominated to participate in the program via parents, teachers, or self-nomination. The students would receive either SBM and support services or get the support services alone without the mentoring. The duration of the SBM was eight meetings. This time deemed short due to the ability to retain mentors. The pretest survey conducted gleaned scores from 525 students. Posttest survey results were collected from 498 students. Three hundred thirteen girls and 155 boys. More girls showed interest in the program. The survey consisted of a 1-5 Likert type-scale. The survey asked questions related to the connectedness to teachers, social skills, hope, self-esteem, perceived social support, and grades. Among the school participating, seven were elementary schools (all were fifth-grade),

five were middle schools (sixth-eighth grade), and seven were high schools. Mentors met with students for one hour each week for eight weeks. Eight students were not able to be served due to the inefficiency of the mentors or the mentor quitting prior to the start of the program.

Across the 19 schools, the study results revealed elementary boys and high school girls benefited the most from SBM. Elementary boys showed reported feeling more connected to their school, peers of a different culture, self-esteem, and support from friends. Small positive effects were discovered among all groups in self-esteem, connectedness to peers, and social support of friends. These results were presented through the use of a hierarchical learning model. Karcher (2008) states the results show SBM being more beneficial to elementary school boys and high school girls. Though mentor fidelity concerns hampered the study, it provides the groundwork for future guidance and further study expansion.

Single-Sex Classrooms. Lembo (2011) conducted a quantitative study to examine the achievement of male and female students placed in single-gender classrooms. In the study, students from fourth, fifth and sixth-grade classrooms were examined over a four-year period. Posttests from students placed in single-gender classrooms and those placed in coeducational classrooms were compared. The purpose of the student was to address the achievement gap between male and female students. Results from this study determined that there was no significant advantage.

Whitmire and Bailey (2010) participated in an interview which addressed the gender disparities in female and male academic achievement. The authors theorize that an over-emphasis on order, sitting still, and passive learning are much more suited to girls than boys. This, in turn, prevents male students from benefiting from regular classroom instruction at the same rate as their female counterparts. Whitmire and Bailey (2010) suggest single-sex schools,

limited emphasis on gender roles in schools, and more diverse teacher hiring as possible solutions to the gender gap in education. Also, both educators state minority boys from low-income homes are more likely to be at-risk in suffering from the gender gap.

Valid Referral Processes. Researchers hoped to address teacher classroom management training from a variety of angles. Plax, Kearney, and Tucker (1986) addressed the deficits in the lack of teacher training in the area of the communication of classroom misbehaviors. The study found the novice teachers were more likely to refer students using the referral process. They are less likely to communicate with the students or parents directly regarding disruptive behavior regardless of the level of intensity.

Pas, Bradshaw, and Mitchell (2011) conducted a study to determine the validity of office referrals as it relates to identifying problem behaviors in students who receive frequent referrals. This study identified three essential goals. The first aim of the study was to address to the reliability of the office discipline referrals by comparing two different data sources: administrative discipline system and teacher reports. The second aim of the study was to address convergent validity with similar measures such as ratings of aggressive or lack of attentive behavior and divergent validity with prosocial behaviors. The third aim of this study was to address whether teacher ratings of student misbehavior are associated with office discipline referrals when other students, classroom, and contextual elements are controlled. This study was conducted in 335 general classrooms in a K-5 setting. Of the 9,397 students, a random sample of 8,645 was chosen. All schools received school-wide training on PBIS systems with full implementation for four years. The study concluded that children who exhibited disruptive behavior were more likely to receive a referral than students who exhibited prosocial behavior. It was also concluded that office referrals are signals or indicators for students who suffer

academically. The study also concluded that poor classroom management was linked to increased office referrals.

Summary of the Literature Review

The disproportionality in the public-school systems has been and continues to pose a problem for male students. A wide-range of explanations are offered to justify why this problem exists, but there are no solid answers in solving the problem. Male students are being taught in a system that does not reflect them daily. Most boys are viewed as loud, jovial, rambunctious, and playful. These are all characteristics that, traditionally, are hindrances in the educational process. When it comes to the academic success of these students, further research will be conducted to determine exactly how much discipline plays a role in their success of failure within the system.

All stakeholders are a part of the process to repair the discipline processes and procedures. Teacher training, attitudes, and preparation regarding effective behavior management systems within the classrooms are needed and necessary. Loss of instructional time, teacher perceptions and relationships with students, and the transition from elementary to middle school plays a significant role in whether male students receive office referral, receive corrective discipline, or are labeled as disruptive students. Not controlling outside factors, such as parental support and involvement, the school and personnel within should take charge of the effort to aid the male students in becoming more successful academically and behaviorally within the system.

Chapter III

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents the applied research design and methods used in this research to decrease the overall discipline occurrences of male elementary students within LTES. Applied research serves the purpose of addressing a problem of practice and improving the overall effectiveness of the organization by building the capacity for collaborative learning. The first component of Chapter Three includes an explanation of the collaborative development of the action plan. This action plan addresses the problem of excessive discipline referrals of male students within the organization. This component also includes a description of the collaborative process among stakeholders, a timeline for the action plan to take place, current research which provides the direction for the process, and organizational information used to create the action plan.

The second component of Chapter Three details the complete action plan and starts with the research questions presented in Chapter One. The research questions guide the evaluation of one portion of the action plan. The different portions of the action plan involve an explicit and detailed obligation to address the problem. Within this section, details include one measurable

goal for each research question, roles and responsibilities for each participant, timelines which

followed, resources required, and role assignments for each activity.

The third component of Chapter Three presents the program evaluation of the action plan

to be conducted following the first year of the implementation of the action plan. A formative

and summative assessments are used for each portion of the action plan. Several sources of

qualitative and quantitative data are used to evaluate elements of the action plan which guided

assessments. The focus of the evaluation is to ascertain the level of goal achievement and to

assess the organizational development occurring through the applied research process. Each

research question is answered with data collected and analyzed through the program evaluation

process.

Development of the Action Plan

Upon the conclusion of the 2016-2017 academic school year (SY), the school leadership

team reviewed the end of year discipline data for LTES. The school administration along with

the lead teacher, one fourth grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, one activity teacher, one

counselor, one parent, and one paraprofessional discovered a large number of discipline referrals

were committed by male students within the school. Although there were some classrooms in

which male students experienced success, overall, the school experienced an excessive amount

of discipline referrals from male students. The school experienced a steady increase in discipline

referrals overall. A significant portion of the referrals are attributed to the male student

population of the school. The team met to analyze discipline data, approaches to male student

misbehavior, and classroom management. The discipline data indicates a trend of high male and

school discipline referrals at LTES School (See Table 1).

Table 1

LTES Discipline Referrals by Category (Minor & Major Infractions) Yearly Comparisons

Population	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Male Students	1,303	1,031	1,123
Female Students	494	326	340
Total School	1,867	1,357	1,461

During the 2014-2015 SY, LTES processed 1,867 discipline referrals for fourth and fifth-grade students. Of the 1,867 referrals 1,288 (69%) represented infractions attributed to male students. During the 2015-2016 SY, the number of processed referrals totaled 1,357. Male students represented 1,017 (75%) of the total disciplinary infractions or an increase by 1,171 referrals (6%). The discipline referrals for the 2016-2017 SY increased by 104 referrals (8%) by accumulating 1,461 referrals overall. Of those discipline referrals, 1,110 (76%) were attributed to male student misbehavior which did not change from the previous school year. The school leadership team's goal is to decrease misbehavior occurrences, improve teacher response to minor male student misbehavior, provide positive self-image of male students within the school, and increase positive school public relations. Teachers expressed frustration with the perceived lack of administrative support in addressing disciplinary issues within the school. The parents are concerned their male children are being labeled as trouble-makers, bad boys, and/or class nuisances. School programs, supports, and individual teacher class management styles have aided the school in efforts to decrease disciplinary infractions overall.

Among other school concerns, the school leadership team met to address the issue of male student misbehavior. Discipline data was studied. An action plan along with duties,

responsibilities, and times frames was discussed at each meeting. The meetings revealed a collaborative culture of LTES. The principal was eager to improve the school's image, support teachers, and make decisions which allowed students to make better choices in order to remain in the classroom to receive instruction from their teachers. The team was scheduled to meet at least once per month. The team requested more training for school staff in addressing classroom misbehavior, school-wide incentive supports, and peer buy-in for the PBIS program.

Based on the initial meetings, the leadership team recommitted to improving the schools' approach to discipline school-wide. It was also noted organizational improvement was needed. Lack of a school-wide collaborative approach to student misbehavior was obvious and should be added to the action plan. The school leadership team consisting of the principal, assistant principal, lead teacher, counselor, and one-grade level teacher for each grade convened in the late Spring of 2017. The committee did not reconvene until the Fall of 2017 to discuss plan implementation.

The Action Plan

The Action Plan contains elements driven by research questions which provide aids in gaining an understanding of the problem of the disproportionate discipline of male students in upper elementary school. The first question is designed to address the overarching issue within the organization. The second question seeks to determine potential causes and effects of this disproportionality of male student discipline within the school system. The final question is a focus on a collaborative effort in finding solutions to addressing the problem. Through collaboration with organizational stakeholders, an action plan was developed to address the disproportionately in school discipline and provide solutions to reduce behaviors which lead to escalated discipline occurrences. The action plan development involved collaboration with

organizational leaders, staff members, parents, and students. Discipline referrals prior to and after the implementation of the action plan have been evaluated. The plan has also been revised throughout the process.

The action plan created by the leadership committee was designed to aid in the decrease of the discipline referrals of male students within LTES. The leadership team studied the disciplinary data from 2016-2017 SY. A steady trend of high male discipline referrals was identified. Not only did the leadership team express a need for the decrease in male student discipline, but also recognized a need for stronger teacher-student relationships. Due to the nature of the organizational needs, a decision was made to provide Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training, initiate a school-wide approach to discipline in the form of a stronger Positive Behavior and Incentives program, and provide support to our male students through an in-house mentorship program. It is the goal of administration for the process of implementation to be a collaborative process.

The action plan provides the identification of elements of the program with goals and objectives specifically created to achieve a decrease in the disproportionate discipline of male students. The outcome indicators are measurable and are designed to answer the evaluation questions. The measurable indicators allow the researcher to learn the foundational information necessary for the completion of the study. The indicators which measure a behavioral change are vital to the success of the study. Table 2 outlines specific resources, materials, and personnel responsible allocated to ensure improvement in this area.

Table 2

Little Tiger Elementary School Action Plan

Element	Goals	Timeline	Who	Budget
School Leadership Team Meeting	Short term – Increase organizational growth and capacity Long-term – Decrease discipline referrals	August 2017 – Spring 2019	Principal, Assistant Principal	$1,440
Revised PBIS implementation	Short-term – Reinforce school-wide approach to misbehavior Long-term – Increase fidelity of Tier process	November 2017 – Spring 2019	Certified PBIS trained teacher, one-grade level teacher representative	$10,000
CPI Training	Short-term – promote positive teacher-student relationships Long-term – Increase teacher capacity in de-escalation techniques	June 2018 – October 2018	Assistant principal, district school assistant principal	$4,500
GEMS mentor program	Short-term – increase opportunities for positive school involvement Long-term – decrease male student behavior incidents	August 2018	Principal, Lead Teacher, Leadership Team Sub-committee	$1,340

School leadership team meeting. The first and second team meetings were held during

August and September 2017. Team goals were set, norms created, and purpose established. The

leadership team wanted to decrease the number of discipline referrals by addressing the

population of students which represented 76% of all school referrals, male students. They wanted to ensure each member was committed to the overall goal, was willing to serve, and dedicated to a solution-oriented mindset. The third team meeting took place in early November 2017. The fourth meeting occurred in January of 2018, and the fifth occurred in April 2018. The scope of this action research allowed for the collection of data between August 2017 and May of 2018. The leadership team meetings started in August of 2017 and concluded in May of 2018. The team meetings were composed of four key objectives: (1) review of data; (2) alternatives to punishment; (3) improve teacher-student relationships; and (4) improve school culture.

    The teachers were provided teacher and student discipline data from the previous and current school years. Data were carefully explained to ensure all teachers gained a full understanding of the students' disciplinary history and standings for the year. Data were compared and analyzed to determine specific areas of concern for each student. High volumes of minor infractions indicated possible classroom management concerns, weak teacher-student relationships, or lack of intervention implementation. High major infractions were indications of possible supervision concerns, weak teacher-student relationships, or other student issues (weak conflict resolution skills, anger management, personal issues, etc.).

    The role of the administrator and the response to class disruptions was reviewed. Input was given by the committee to improve practices used when addressing student misbehavior. Removing students from the classroom via suspension or in-school detention, using corporal punishment, and sending students to an alternative school remain ineffective when overused. The evidence suggests that the adoption of district-wide, zero-tolerance policies resulting in suspensions and expulsions from school do not improve student behavior or make a positive

contribution to school safety (Skiba, 2002). Alternatives to punitive punishment were among the solutions sought to decrease the disproportionate discipline of male students.

With each meeting, teachers were given a platform to share ideas, provide experiences, and provide evidence of the effects of positive school engagement. Along with the opportunity to learn came opportunities to share with each meeting. Teachers were given a platform to share which interventions worked in their classrooms and which did not. Successful strategies were shared with the body of other staff members and reports given back to committee for evaluation.

PBIS modification. Tier data was collected along with discipline data. Student records from the previous school year contain interventions selected for a specific student. They also stated which were successful and which were not. The leadership team noted the PBIS program would be the optimal avenue in addressing the problem of disproportionate male discipline. Under the current implementation standards, the team cited lack of teacher fidelity, low student interest, and poor administrative emphasis as potential causes of poor results. Data collected from the tier interventions determined how many male students were receiving intervention prior to the start of the study.

The PBIS program requires consistent and persistent monitoring of the interventions and supports provided to students through the program. The leadership team recognized this as a deficient within the school. The leadership team selected one PBIS certified teacher to assist in revisions and full implementation of the current program. The team determined full fidelity and buy-in from teachers, parents, and students was not effective. The goal of the leadership team is to increase the overall effectiveness of the program. The PBIS program was designed specifically to aid in the disproportionality actions and male student misbehavior. A sub-committee of the

leadership team was formed to meet bi-monthly to evaluate the programs' progress and implementation. Full implementation modified PBIS program began in August 2018.

CPI Training. The third aspect of the action plan involves the implementation of Non-Violent Crisis Interventions (NCI) or Crisis Prevention Interventions (CPI) techniques. In addition to providing support and positive incentives for male students, the leadership team identified a need for increased positive teacher-student relationships. New teachers, teachers new to the school, and teachers identified by the leadership team as having excessive discipline referrals for the two reporting require training. Fourth and Fifth-grade teachers from an additional school within the school district were also assigned to attend the training by their building principal also.

June 2018 was the set date for the training. The training session consisted of 40 teachers and lasted approximately 12 hours over a two-day period. The training was led by the LTES Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal addressed topics such as verbal and non-verbal communication, types of student responses which are coping mechanisms, and which are aggressive, and physical restraint techniques. With each topic discussed, teachers trained in strategies to de-escalate the problematic behavior. The teachers had a designated place and time to meet. The meeting area consisted of tables which accommodated group discussions and note-taking. A large open area was also required for physical restraint practice. By combining two schools for the training, teachers shared ideas and provided examples which foster growth and assist in the learning process.

Throughout the CPI training, teachers participated in role-play activities to demonstrate productive and non-productive ways to de-escalate a student in crisis. Through role-play, teachers were given a behavior to demonstrate (as the student), a strategy to use (as the teacher),

and assigned the duty of observer. The observer provided feedback to the group and entire class to reinforce the CPI principles. CPI Training concluded with the administration of a post-assessment. Teachers demonstrated learning in both verbal, physical, and cognitive measurements. Teachers shared their experiences in small and whole group settings. They also shared reflections during specific activities and provided feedback to others which encouraged discussion. Teachers also demonstrated restraint techniques in small groups. After each hold or block was explained, the opportunity was given to practice. A written assessment concluded the course. This assessment required a score of 80% to be considered valid. Teachers who demonstrated proficiency were given a CPI certification card. The certification is valid for two years before a Refresher Course is required. Teachers who did not demonstrate proficiency were called back at a later date for additional training and assessment.

Beginning in the Fall of 2018, teachers were evaluated by principals with an additional component of the use of CPI techniques. Though it is understood each teacher has a unique teaching and classroom management style, the requirements for physical child restraint and use of verbal de-escalation techniques are monitored.

G.E.M.S. program implementation. In the Spring of 2018, the leadership team not only identified concerns with male discipline but also noted a significant need for male student role models. A sub-committee of the group, consisting of one male and one female teacher, began a boys and girls club they named Gentlemen Educated Motivated and Sophisticated (G.E.M.S.). This group sought to provide young boys another incentive for positive behavior, give additional support, build strong teacher-student relationships, and foster constructive uses of time, resources, and talents. Through this portion of the committee, the students received counseling,

mentoring, opportunities for community service, and incentives throughout the duration of the school year.

Discipline data was used to identify 15 male students with at least five major discipline infractions from the 2017-2018 SY. Those students were sent invitations to join a mentor program, Gentlemen Education Motivated and Sophisticated (G.E.M.S.). G.E.M.S. would be a school-based mentor program. Mentors were selected and asked to participate by the principal. The principal led a meeting composed of a sub-committee to the leadership teach which included one male and one female teacher. Teachers were chosen as volunteers to foster creativity, motivation, and encouragement to our target population. The teachers were given a school-based mentor program handbook to use as a guide to establish a curriculum for the program. The curriculum focused on character building, leadership skills, academic motivation, and peer relationships. The teachers met in October 2017 and November 2017 to write a handbook for LTES students.

The handbook was written by December 2017 and presented to the principal. Once approved by the principal, the handbook was submitted to district administration. The initial start date was scheduled for January 2018. Principal recommended the start date be rescheduled for August 2018 for full school year implementation. The G.E.M.S. mentor program served as a reinforcement to the PBIS program for a more individualized approach to extreme disciplinary cases.

Action Plan Timeline

The initial stages of the action plan were implemented in August of 2017. The action plan is ongoing. The school leadership team takes part in the continuous review of the discipline data. In combination with leadership team meetings, teacher interviews, and informal conversations

with staff members, the LTES administration ascertained a significant need for increased support for teachers in addressing student misbehavior and male students in ensuring more effective ways in addressing misbehavior. Monthly meetings were held with the school leadership team. Monthly meetings were also held with the PBIS revision committee. In August of 2018, male students participating in the mentorship program met once per week for 50 minutes.

In June of 2018, CPI training took place. Classroom observations and informal checks were conducted daily throughout the 2017-2018 SY and continued throughout the target SY. The informal checks consisted of ensuring teachers were supported in efforts to promote de-escalation of minor male student misbehavior. Conferences were held with teachers who needed additional supports in technique and strategy use. The leadership team held an additional meeting at the end of each nine-week period to review disciplinary data and adjust the plan as needed to meet the needs of the plan.

Resources

The resources needed for this plan included space to accommodate 40 participants for CPI Training. Space was also required for the physical restraint portion of the training. Participant workbooks, posters, and materials to complete assessment were essential in the completion of the training. The participant workbooks cost $450 per 100 books. The cost of sending the assistant principal a training for instructor certification was $1500. Other costs included writing materials, posters, computer, projector, and access to online training materials. The total estimated cost of CPI Training was $4,500.

Resources needed for the G.E.M.S. program included t-shirts for participants and mentors. The cost for 15 male participants, 15 female participants, and 10 mentors including administration at $15 per shirt was approximately $600. The mentors participated in one field

trip during the target SY. The cost of buses was $170 per bus for two buses totaling $340. The participants would attend a free professional baseball game. Participants would receive lunch at a cost of $10 per student and adult. For 40 individuals the cost would be $400.

Program establishment for the PBIS program within the first year of full implementation is $10,000. Training and recertification of the staff is $5,100. Staffing and cost of providing materials, rewards, and incentives, and other materials pertinent to the implementation process would be $4,900. The total cost of the program implementation of the PBIS program was $10,000 for one upper elementary school.

The largest expense for the project would be time. Ongoing professional training, support for students and staff members, and meetings held to review and analyze project progress took time for school administration. The time for two full days of training for CPI strategies was estimated at $480. The monthly one-hour meetings to review discipline data would cost $720 in time expenses. About four hours taken for student field trip preparation would cost $160. An additional amount of $320 in time costs for time spent during the field trip.

The Evaluation Plan

The purpose of the evaluation of the School leadership team meetings, PBIS, G.E.M.S., and NCI programs was to determine if improvements have been made at LTES. The success of the action plan was determined based on outcomes of the long and short-term goals stated within the plan. The long-term goal to decrease school discipline referrals by 20% was measured by the comparison of discipline data from 2017-2018 SY to the target school year. The discipline referrals from the 2017-2018 SY totaling 1,867 were compared to total discipline count from target school year. A decrease in discipline referrals by 20% or 1,490 or less determined programs success. Increased male student referrals from 80% of all discipline referrals by 20%

or more determined program success. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed to improve the process elements of the action plan.

Evaluation Research Questions

Through the use of the evaluation plan, the action plan's success was determined, thereby fostering school administration with the necessary tools needed to build organizational capacity and promote organizational growth and learning. The following were the research questions used to guide the evaluation of the action plan:

1. Did the action plan result in a 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation?

2. What limitations and problems impact the implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program?

3. To what extent did the certified and non-certified staff participate in the PBIS program

4. What areas of success came about as a result of the implementation process?

5. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and all male students?

6. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and male students not participating in G.E.M.S.?

Logic Model

The following logic model is intended to be a simplified representation of the components of a school-wide response to the approach of male student misbehavior. The model describes stakeholders responsible for parts of program implementation. It also describes and defines resources needed to successfully implement the Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NCI), Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), and Gentlemen's Educated Motivated and

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Sophisticated (G.E.M.S) mentor programs successfully. It describes the processes, which includes activities being engaged by the stakeholders and participants.

The activities and participation of the key stakeholders are involved in the program implementations. The logic model also presents the impacts of program implementations. Impacts are the primary results of the program implementations. The purpose of the logic model is to clearly describe each program implemented, intentions of implemented programs, and used as a tool to guide stakeholders during the evaluation process. Further planning is guided by final outcomes. The logic model shows a clear summary of the action plan elements, goals to be attained, and the evaluation processes which assist in answering the research questions. Table 3 lists the elements and details of the evaluation plan.

Table 3

Logic Model

Element	Goals	Timeline	Who	Evaluation Data
School Leadership Team Meeting	Short term – Increase organizational growth and capacity Long-term – Decrease discipline referrals	August 2017 – Spring 2019	Principal, Assistant Principal, Lead Teacher, Two certified teachers, one paraprofessional, one parent	Teacher interviews Focus group interviews Discipline referrals
PBIS Modification	Short-term – Reinforce school-wide approach to misbehavior Long-term – Increase fidelity of Tier process	November 2017 – Spring 2019	Certified PBIS trained teacher, one-grade level teacher representative	Teacher survey Focus Group Interviews
CPI Training	Short-term – promote positive teacher-student relationships Long-term – Increase teacher capacity in de-escalation techniques	June 2018 – October 2018	Assistant principal, district school assistant principal	Focus Group Interviews Classroom observations Teacher survey
G.E.M.S. program	Short-term – increase opportunities for positive school involvement Long-term – decrease male student behavior incidents	August 2018	Principal, Lead Teacher, Leadership Team Sub-committee	Student survey Classroom observations Discipline data

Evaluation Design

       A mixed methods approach to the study was utilized. All fourth and fifth-grade students received the PBIS rewards and interventions. Approximately 30 students, 15 male, and 15 female students were chosen to participate in the G.E.M.S. mentor program. For the short and long-term goal described in the logic model, the data was collected at the end of the target school year. Male discipline data from three years prior to program implementation was compared to the target school year. The information provided to the researcher by the Little Tiger School District through a secure student information database system.

       School leadership team meetings. The first action plan element being evaluated is the school leadership team meetings. The long-term goal of this element is to use the information gathered collaboratively to decrease overall school discipline referrals. The short-term goal of the leadership team was to increase the growth capacity of the organization. Following the initial team meeting in August of 2017, the team reviewed discipline referral documents from three years prior to the PBIS program implementation at LTES. The leadership team looked at the number of disciplinary referrals written by the teachers, the referring behavior, and the final action by the administrator. To determine what behaviors led up to the referrals, disciplinary data from the past three years were reviewed. Misconduct locations, times, and final action by the administrator were also reviewed. Data were disaggregated to show minor, and major infractions earned by both male and female students from their fourth-grade terms. A comparison was made to the same students as they entered fifth-grade.

       Teacher interviews were conducted by the researcher prior to the discussion of discipline data. A selection of teachers, four volunteers from each grade, participated in an interview to discuss school culture, teacher-student relationships, male student behavior perception, and

administrative approach to discipline. General information regarding teachers' educational background, teaching experience, and other credentials were also collected. The interviews were conducted during the teachers' planning period or after school hours. The time was chosen by the teacher.

Focus group interviews have the purpose of running concurrently with teacher interviews. The researcher conducted a focus group. There was a range of novice to 25 or more years teaching experience of volunteer teachers chosen to participate. A clear understanding of school culture, discipline practices, and best classroom management practices was required from participants selected. A focus group provided the researcher and participants an avenue for discussion and conversation regarding the LTES' approach to discipline. The identification of any existing themes within the school culture and discipline practices provided a use for the information gathered from disciplinary data, participant interviews, and focus group interviews.

PBIS modification. The second element of the action plan being evaluated in the modification of the PBIS program. The long-term goal of this element was to increase the teacher fidelity of the Tier process. The short-term goal of this element is to reinforce a school-wide approach to discipline misbehavior through positive reinforcement. A closed-ended survey was administered to teachers prior to the modification of the PBIS program to determine teacher understanding of the program. It was also utilized to glean an understanding of the support the teachers felt under the current system. All school certified teachers participated in the survey. Data from the surveys was collected and used to guide the completion of the action plan.

The end of the school year (EOY) provided the opportunity to conduct a focus group interview. Participation of teachers was voluntary. Guiding discussion topics regarding previous and current PBIS practices, attitudes and perceptions towards male students, and current

discipline practices was the focus. Discussions also provided information regarding administrative support in achieving positive reinforcement to students for positive behavior. Gathered information enabled an assessment of PBIS practices and which guide future improvements.

CPI training. The third element being evaluated was CPI de-escalation techniques. The long-term goal for this element was to increase teacher knowledge and capacity in decreasing major discipline school infractions through de-escalation practices. The short-term goal was to promote positive teacher-student relationships. Discipline data was analyzed and disaggregated during leadership team meetings to show minor and major discipline infractions. The data was used to determine goal attainment.

Classroom observations were conducted to determine the use of de-escalation techniques. They also provided information to provide support to teachers. The researchers used district drop-in forms to complete observations. Notes regarding CPI strategies were made in the appropriate area. Teachers should recognize both verbal and non-verbal cues which signal an opportunity to assist the person in crisis. The Assistant Principal was responsible for leading professional development and providing additional support to teachers. The observation of 15 or 60% of classrooms were used and selected at random. The data was used to determine best practices in student misbehavior.

Open-ended teacher surveys were completed at the beginning and at the conclusion of the school year. The surveys provided information regarding how teachers handle male student misbehavior prior to and after the implementation of CPI strategies. Each teacher at LTES completed the surveys. The information gathered from the pre and post surveys were used to assess goal attainment of the action plan and guide future approaches to discipline.

G.E.M.S. program. The last element to be evaluated by the action plan was the implementation of the G.E.M.S. mentor program. The long-term goal of the program was to decrease male student misbehavior. The short-term goal was to increase opportunities for male students to attain positive school involvement. Discipline data was gathered and analyzed during the leadership team meetings. The data was used to identify male students who participated in the program and monitor their discipline status throughout the school year.

One requirement for male student participants was a pre and post-school year survey. The survey contained a combination of open and closed-ended questions which address the student's perception of discipline in their school, the choices they make when acting out, and perception of teachers at LTES. The surveys provided the researcher guidance as to the needs of the male student participants, determined common themes among staff and students, and allowed the researcher to assess goal attainment of the action plan.

Informal observations conducted by G.E.M.S. mentors are used throughout the target school year. Mentors conducted informal observations at the beginning, middle and end of the target school year. The mentors made anecdotal notes regarding specific verbal and non-verbal behaviors and potential antecedents to negative behaviors. The notes were used to foster conversations between mentee and mentor pertaining to behavior progress and decision-making. The notes were used during mentoring sessions as a tool for redirection and learning for male students and mentors. The data from these notes were collected at the conclusion of the target school year to assess goal achievement.

Process, Outcome, and Impact Evaluation

Short term goals were evaluated at the middle and end of the year to ensure effective program implementation throughout. Quantitative data collected includes discipline summary

reports, attendance reports, academic progress reports, and teacher and student survey results conducted at the beginning and end of the program. The reports were collected from a secure system, Student Administrative Management Systems (SAMS). The data included beginning, mid-point, and end of year student reports, the teacher reported infractions, term grades, and term attendance. Data was also collected in the beginning, midpoint, and end of the year. Teachers chosen to participate in the collection of data met the following criteria: the teacher was interested in collaborating with parents, students, administrators, and peer teachers to improve school discipline. The fifth-grade class contained 284 students in total. The most resounding purpose of the fifth-grade classrooms being chosen as the sample for this study was the comparison of referrals from their fourth-grade term to fifth grade.

Data collection and analysis. Data was collected from the beginning of the school year (BOY) in 2017 until the end of the school year (EOY) in 2018. Qualitative data collected includes comprehensive discipline reports, mentor observation notes, focus group notes and transcripts, interviews with fifth-grade teachers, classroom observation records, and open-ended survey questions. The comprehensive discipline reports provide a detailed account of each discipline infractions. These accounts include teacher description of the incident, participant response or other comments, witness account(s), parent comments, if able to be contacted, and administrative notes. From these reports, the determination of meeting the overall goal of the action study can be made. Results from the reports were compared to the results from the previous two school years.

Teacher and staff surveys were administered in two parts. One pre-survey administered before the revised PBIS program was implemented. Information from this survey guided the course of leadership team discussions in determining school climate, discipline reporting habits,

areas of concern for safety, and teacher-student relationships. A final survey was administered at the close of the school year to assess the impact of changes made by the leadership team. Survey results generated information regarding staff and student attitudes, trends, and beliefs about the approach of LTES towards school discipline, male students' misbehavior, and teacher student relationships. Survey results highlighted staff and student attitudes, beliefs, and trends regarding school discipline, male student misbehavior, and teacher-student relationships.

The mentor notes included times and dates of meetings with the mentee, notes regarding progress with response to the program, changes witnesses, and progress made. Open-ended survey questions were completed by fifth-grade teachers and the selected students participating in the G.E.M.S. mentor program. The open-ended survey questions provided feedback and perception information from the instructional staff regarding program benefits, comments, questions, or concerns they may have. Classroom observation notes contain mandated school district information, notes on teacher-student interactions, classroom management styles, and student behavior.

The computer software, Qualtrics, was used in the collection and analysis of all information. Qualtrics was founded in 2002 by a software developer Ryan Smith. Qualtrics provides extremely sophisticated and powerful survey tools, complex branching logic, ability to incorporate audio & video in surveys, and detailed data reporting (University of Mississippi Research). Responses per participant may be recorded via email, text, social media, or Quick Response (QR) code. The software directly and immediately records data received from the surveys, allocates information inputted to appropriate areas, and generates reports detailing results per question. The researcher input survey questions manually. Qualtrics analyzed each

question and provided suggestions for most appropriate answer format. Participant's responses to survey questions cannot be manipulated.

Data collected was used alone and in combination with one another. Data collection and analysis was simultaneous processes. Throughout the study, trends, attitudes, and beliefs were identified. Data was collected in the school of those being observed and interviewed. This significance of using qualitative methods was the allowance for each section to be written in the context of the appropriate environment. The researcher along with the school leadership team disaggregated the data. Focus group and classroom observation notes were reviewed, themes identified, and antecedents of behavior recognized. By using interviews or focus groups to collect data, the themes were more appropriately addressed within the context for which the topic intends. The themes provided a clearer view of whether the action plan was successful and aided in the determination of solutions to the current issue.

Interviews were conducted with the permission from six of 12 fifth-grade teachers participating in the study. Audio recordings were transcribed. Focus group protocols were used to conduct the interviews with voluntary participants. The meetings occurred at the midpoint and end of the year. Focus group meetings were recorded and transcribed to highlight common themes.

Evaluation timeline. A timeline to discuss each phase of the evaluation process was addressed. Stakeholder engagement began in August of 2017 and continued throughout the action plan implementation and evaluation. Stakeholders participated in a leadership team meeting in November of 2017 to provide a perception of school culture and approach to discipline at LTES. Teacher perceptions of male and female student behavior were also gleaned during the meeting. Teacher interviews were conducted in August 2018 and December of 2018

to gain teacher perception of the current implementation and school approaches to discipline. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from BOY 2018 to EOY 2019. Student discipline summary reports were collected every two months beginning June 2018. Classroom observations teacher feedback were collected and administered throughout the implementation of the identified action plan. A teacher open-ended survey was administered prior to and at the conclusion of program implementation.

Conclusion

Organizational growth and success require the essential component of collaboration among all key stakeholders to achieve the goal of the action plan. Teachers are indispensable in the process of increasing a positive school image, building stronger teacher-student relationships, and establishing a school community which demonstrates safety and educational learning. By decreasing the amount of instructional time missed by male student misbehavior, we hope for school achievement and community perception to improve. By ensuring that each stakeholder has a voice, the opportunity for success is increased. Measurable goals were presented and communicated to the school, teachers, and students to ensure effective program implementation. Chapter Four will present the finding of this research study.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

As stated in Chapter III, the intent of this action research study was to investigate the problem of disproportionate male discipline at LTES, develop an action plan specifically addressing the problem of practice, and improve the overall effectiveness of the organization by building the capacity for collaborative learning. Chapter IV presents key findings from quantitative and qualitative data sources. An analysis of the data sources collected separately and concurrently is used to provide information which appropriately respond to the central research question: Did the action plan result in a 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation? The following questions allowed me to address the overarching question:

1. Did the action plan result in a 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation?

2. What limitations and problems impact the implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program?

3. To what extent did the certified and non-certified staff participate in the PBIS program?

4. What areas of success came about as a result of the implementation process?

5. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and all male students?

6. What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and male students not participating in G.E.M.S.?

Chapter IV presents key findings from teacher surveys, classroom observations, teacher interviews, a focus group, and discipline referral reports. Information from the data sources collected were converged to identify common themes and categories to explore the relationship between the implementation of the Positive Behavior Incentive and Supports (PBIS) program and male student behavior in the elementary school setting. The measurement tool used to determine outcomes are discipline referrals in addition to teacher interviews and survey analysis.

The school leadership team met to explore academic and behavioral concerns within the organization. Through discussion and data analysis, the team determined male students were at risk of missing quality classroom instructional time due to classroom misbehavior and discipline referrals. According to 2016-2017 school discipline data, male students accounted for 79% of all minor discipline referrals, while females only accounted for 21%. Of the major referrals reported, male students represented 77% of all infractions and females were 23%. The data reported, encouraged the school leadership team to develop solutions to address the issue of male student misbehavior at LTES. Further explanation of the discipline referrals accumulated during this study is presented in this chapter.

The researcher sought to identify areas affecting male student behavior in a negative capacity. The goal was to increase organizational knowledge and build capacity within those directly impacting such behaviors. The researcher identified four elements presented in this action research study which are proposed to assist in answering the essential research question.

The four elements included regular school leadership team meetings, PBIS implementation and modification, teacher CPI training, and G.E.M.S implementation. Each area focused on a specific aspect of the male student education experience. By applying these four elements, the researcher anticipated the growth of teacher and student capacity and decrease the overall school discipline at LTES.

Statistical methodology. Teacher interviews were used as the primary evaluation tool for this study. Teacher responses to interview questions were combined with BOY and EOY open-ended survey questions to generate, consolidate, and organize responses. After conducting the teacher interviews, the interview notes were collected and common themes identified. Headers were created during the generation of broad themes uncovered from the responses. Those headers were then narrowed into four themes which were classified as the following: (1) classroom management style/preference, (2) perception of students, (3) teacher-student relationship, and (4) school culture. The identification of any existing themes within the school culture and discipline practices provide a use for the information gathered from discipline referral data and focus group interviews.

Surveys were administered and used as an essential evaluation tool in this action research study. A Likert 3 level scale survey was used in the evaluation of teacher respondents. Not typical, somewhat typical, and very typical were the answer choices used to describe the teacher perception of student behavior, school culture, and teacher response to student misbehavior. The neutral ratings were removed. Open-ended questions were also included in the survey to provide more elaborate responses to the research topic.

Research Question One

Did the action plan result in the 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation?

 Background Statistics. The LTES leadership team reviewed data from the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school year (SY) and found high rates of discipline and misbehavior from male students. To improve overall school performance, build positive student-teacher relationships, and build teacher capacity, the team developed a plan of action to address the problem. The discipline referrals for the 2016-2017 (SY) increased 110 referrals (8%) from the previous SY. The increase from 1,357 discipline referrals to 1,461 referrals was the main concern for this study. Of those 2016-2017 SY discipline referrals, 1,123 (76.73%) were assigned to male student misbehavior. The 2017-2018 SY fared slightly better with 1,245 referrals in total. Male discipline referrals decreased from 1,110 to 869 referrals (-7.0%) representing 69.7% of all discipline referrals. The school leadership team's goal is to continue to decrease male student misbehavior occurrences, improve teacher response to minor male student misbehavior, provide positive self-image of male students within the school, and increase positive school public relations.

Table 4

Student disciplinary action summary (2017-2018)

Total enrolled students n=584				
Discipline Referrals Received	**Student Total**	**Percent**	**Male Students**	**Percent**
Yes	281	48.12%	179	57%
No	303	51.88%	135	42.99%

When addressing the entire scope of male misbehavior at LTES, it was important to put the number of discipline infractions into context. During the 2017-2018 SY, the LTES student body included 584 students. Out of the 584 students, 314 (53.8%) were male students. Of the 314 male students, 179 (57%) received discipline referrals throughout the SY. There were 135 male students who received none. The leadership team was able to identify 30 of the 179 (16.76%) of the discipline referral recipients as chronically misbehaving students. The researcher earlier defined a chronically misbehaving student as a male student who received five or more Level Two or Three discipline referrals throughout the SY. See Appendix G for the discipline referral form used by teachers and administrators during the school referral process. The action plan was created to specifically address 30 male students while providing additional supports and incentives to all students. Table 4 provides a summary of student discipline data for the 2017-2018 SY.

Target Year. To address the issue of disproportionate discipline of male students, the school leadership team continued to review the discipline data. The discipline referrals during the target school year were analyzed by the team during monthly meetings after program implementation for the LTES student body of 593 students. Out of the 593 students, 364 (61.38%) were male students. Of the 364 male students, 195 (53.57%) received discipline referrals throughout the current SY. There were approximately 169 (46.43%) male students who received no disciplinary referrals. The male students who were identified as chronically misbehaving students (n=30) were targeted for placement in the G.E.M.S. program. Of this target subgroup, five male students continued to accumulate excessive referrals during the target school year. One male student withdrew from the school district and 12 were promoted to the sixth-grade. Two male students, not previously identified from the previous SY, were classified as

chronically misbehaving students due the accumulation of five or more Level Two or Three referrals. From this data, the target male subgroup was reduced to 19 male students out of 195 (9.74%) of the total male student population.

The total number of discipline referrals accumulated was 545 by midpoint of the SY and 1242 during the target year of program implementation, which is a decrease of three referrals (.0024%) overall. Male students accounted for (940/1242) 75.68% of the total number of discipline referrals. Female students accounted for 23.41% (302) discipline referrals which is a reduction of 191 referrals. The overall change of school discipline was less than one percent. There was an increase in the number of incidents of male student misbehavior. Instances of male student discipline referrals increased from 869 to 940 (see Table 5). Male discipline referrals increased by 71 referrals (8.67%). Female student discipline decreased from 376 incidents to 302 incidents, which is a decreased by 74 referrals (-19.68%). A comparative summary of discipline referrals by male and female student during program implementation are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

LTES Discipline Referrals by Category (Minor & Major Infractions) Yearly Comparisons

Subgroup	2017-2018	Target Year	% Difference
Male Referrals	869	940	+8.67%
Female Referrals	376	302	-19.68%
Total Referrals	1,245	1,242	-.24%

To further explore the problem of disproportionate male student discipline, a breakdown of reported infractions was generated. Of the six most common discipline infractions from the 2017-2018 SY, there was a decrease in four categories ranging from eight percent to 54%. Major categories such as Disruption of a Normal School Day and Disrespect/Defiance both increased. Disruption of a Normal School Day, which involved incidents where students were in possession

of a weapon or made a threat to harm themselves, their peers, or an adult, increased from 47 to 64 incidents. This represented an increase of 36.67% over the previous SY. Incidents of teacher-perceived disrespectful or defiant behavior toward adults increased from 125 to 147 occurrences (13.6%). These categories accounted for less than three percent (37) of the total number of referrals reported by the end of the year. Table 6 is a representation of the six most commonly reported discipline infractions for LTES by teachers.

Table 6

Disciplinary actions by offense and type

Type of Infraction	Total Disciplinary Actions 2017	Total Disciplinary Actions 2018	% Increase or Reduction
Breaking Established Classroom Rules	207	190	-8.21%
Disrespect/Defiance	125	142	+13.60%
Disruption of a Normal School Day*	47	64	+36.17%
Fighting or Provoking a Fight	110	50	-54.55%
Vulgarity/Profanity	76	68	-10.53%
Abusing the Rights of Others (hitting, kicking, horseplay)	172	130	-24.42%

*Note: Includes weapons possession and threat to peers or staff.

According to the findings of this study, the goal for the central question was not achieved. The less than one percent change provides an overall reduction in referrals. The *t*-test resulted in a finding of .49 which does not meet the educational standard of .05. When examined by gender, male referrals increased by nearly nine percent while female referrals reduced by almost 20%. These are stark contrasts when considering the treatments were similar, if not the same.

Research Question Two

What limitations and problems impact the implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions

and Supports program?

       Team Meetings. When implementing or reintroducing a program which has lost its

appeal, barriers are to be expected. Teacher fidelity and buy-in to the new initiative impacts

results. The PBIS team met eight times before the midterm. The team consisted of three

administrators, the lead teacher, the school counselor, two gifted teachers, two fifth-grade

teachers, two fourth-grade teachers, and one Special Education teacher who had been trained in

PBIS in a previous school district. The initial meetings held on (find the date) set the tone for the

future meetings. A team leader, communications director, data specialist, time keeper, and

recorder were all assigned duties. The remaining team members participated in the development

of ideas and concepts contributing to group progress. The team still meets for approximately 30-

minutes before school begins to ensure committee member attendance and results in no

instructional time being lost. Meetings took place every two weeks for the first five months of

the SY and continue once a month for the remainder of the year. Meeting notes collected detail

the plan and progress of the PBIS implementation and modification. A school motto, R.O.A.R.

(Respect, Ownership, Attitude, Responsibility), was established to generate more focus on

specific areas affecting overall student misbehavior. A monthly attribute is assigned to which

teachers specifically instruct students in expected behavior and reward the students based on

their application of the monthly attribute. Students receive R.O.A.R. tickets on a daily basis for

appropriate school behavior from observing staff members. Students are able to utilize these

R.O.A.R. tickets in a weekly drawing or save them for larger prizes in the PBIS store. A glass

case in the main hallway displays prizes for students and staff. The R.O.A.R. tickets of students

not drawn names of students not drawn in the weekly prize box are placed in a larger box at a later date. Every nine weeks, one name from each grade-level is drawn for the larger prizes.

Teacher survey. The PBIS team set a goal of 80% buy-in from all school staff. To achieve this goal, teachers are offered monthly incentives to encourage participation in PBIS with fidelity. Teachers are provided all materials necessary to implement PBIS in their classrooms. The teachers receive R.O.A.R. tickets for students, order sheets for the PBIS store, posters for their classrooms, and opportunities to win prizes when their students are selected as prize winners. According to the school discipline survey (Appendix D) completed by 31 teachers (62% response rate), 90.23% respondents describe school teachers and administrators show high expectations for all students by modeling appropriate school behavior as "very typical," while 9.67% describe this behavior as "somewhat typical." In the same survey, 16.13% of teachers describe their belief that all students were treated with respect by their peers as "very typical," while 70.97% describe it as "somewhat typical" behavior. When asked if students were taught and encouraged to use effective social skills, conflict resolution, and coping skills such as respect for others, anger and stress management, and effective communication, 62% of respondents indicated "very typical" and 32.26% answered "somewhat typical."

Teacher interviews. To further explore teacher support of the PBIS program implementation, teacher interviews were conducted. Fifteen teachers volunteered to be interviewed. Six fifth-grade teachers, five fourth-grade teachers, one lead teacher, one counselor, one Special Education teacher, and one special area teacher (librarian) participated in the interviews. Three respondents to the survey indicated they have been in the field of education between zero and seven years (20%), while six respondents (40%) indicated they have taught for between eight and 15 years, and an additional six (40%) respondents indicated they have taught

for 16 or more years. When asked if they were adequately trained to handle minor class

disruptions, all respondents stated yes.

In regard to team meetings, communication issues occurred in the first few months of

program implementation. Procedures and rewards were not clearly defined by committee

members resulting from both students and staff members. Survey participation rate of 62%

proved to be an obstacle considering the staff was truly a captive audience. Higher response rates

would have provided a more transparent perspective of the staff. The teacher interviews were

limited to 15 teachers represents only 30% of a diverse staff. The full voice of the staff has

therefore not been heard.

Research Question Three

To what extent did the certified and non-certified staff participate in the PBIS program?

To answer this question, data from the focus group, teacher interviews, and surveys was

analyzed. The extended responses from the implementation survey and responses from

interviewees were categorized by theme and grouped into headings to provide the direction of

summation.

Focus Group Findings. A total of ten educators participated in the focus group.

Collectively, the participants have 126 years of teaching experience. Forty-three of these years

were in service to the students of LTES. The focus group was comprised of one male and nine

female teachers. The participants met for one hour and 15 minutes to discuss current practices in

the discipline of male students, school culture, teacher-student relationships, and classroom

management. The researcher asked the questions while a volunteer educator took notes. The

questions asked about topics which were explicitly relevant to the outcome of the central

question (See Appendix F). The notes were analyzed by the researcher to determine common

themes. One outcome from the group was the establishment of a PBIS team and the concept of the male mentor program G.E.M.S. Table 7 provides specific quotes from the focus group participants to support the implementation of a PBIS team and the male mentor program.

Table 7

Focus Group Responses

Theme	Teacher Statements
Classroom Management Style/Preference	"If we have a rule stating that four checks equal an office referral, then the student should be responsible enough to manage their own behavior." "If you don't have rules and stick to them, then other students will suffer."
Teacher Perception	"I'm probably a little more patient with the girls than I am with the boys." "Boys are just so rough and aggressive."
Student-Teacher Relationships	"I just talked to him so that he could understand I'm human too."
School Culture	"Overall, I feel safe at school." "Children should feel safe in my classroom."

Classroom management style. Focus group teachers felt ill-prepared to deal with the common discipline behaviors with male students displayed within their classrooms. Veteran teachers in the focus group commented about what they learn was through trial and error. Through experiences over time, the veteran teachers learned what it takes to appropriately handle

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both minor and major classroom disruptions. Though it was agreed no single solution worked, the focus group stated it was the duty of the teacher to continuously grow over time in an effort to adapt to their classroom environment. Novice teachers shared their experience regarding classroom management thus far has been limited to classes taken in college. Though ideals, theories, and concepts at the time sounded wonderful, the novice teacher observed most of the information learned does not always apply to their classroom experiences.

Teacher perception. Within the context of males and females behavior, male students were described in the following ways: (1) aggressive; (2) confrontational; (3) angry; (4) non-compliant; (5) has to have the last word; (6) needs more one-on-one attention; (7) displays more disruptive behaviors (taping, humming, talking); (8) lacks conflict resolution skills; and (9) is involved in more outside conflicts. When describing the female students encountered throughout the day, the students were described as: (1) showing inappropriate classroom behavior (rolling eyes and neck, smacking sounds, etc.); (2) flinging hair during class; and (3) being quietly mischievous. According to the descriptions, male students are viewed as more non-compliant and disruptive; with the focus group further comparing them to children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) behaviors. Regarding the female students' behavior, teachers are not alarmed. There was a noticeable tone different when speaking about male students. There was a softer and lower tone when teachers noted behaviors of female students. The tone changed dramatically; the focus group using sarcasm, expressive and frustrated language when reporting male student behaviors. Admittedly, teachers reported giving female students more opportunities to make a more positive behavior choice, while boys, typically disciplined in a more abrupt manner.

Student-teacher relationships. An emerging theme from the group was a need for strengthened relationships between both students and teachers. Along with this theme, teachers expressed a need for clear expectations and guidance by the administration in handling classroom misbehavior. This need is reflected in the various forms of classroom management styles observed and the tolerance of teacher. Other themes included reaching out to parents for support and forming common connections with students as the backbone of classroom management. The male teacher in the focus group told of how he and another male student both had fathers who did not live in the home with them growing up. Although both fathers were actively involved in their lives, the day-to-day contact was not there. By sharing his story with this male student, the male teacher felt the student began to see him as a person, not only as a teacher. The teacher was able to hold the male student more accountable, allow for opportunities to reflect on behavior and provide him with an avenue to seek help or guidance when needed. The focus group marveled at the revelation of the male teacher.

There was a contrast in statements made in reference to this issue. While agreeing students come first and acknowledging adults should adapt to the dynamic of the classroom, there was a firm stance regarding a my-room-my-way approach. When this was brought to the attention of the group, it began to trigger emotions by teachers stating "if you don't have rules and stick to them, then other students will suffer." "If we have a rule stating that four checks equal an office referral, then the student should be responsible enough to manage their own behavior."

Behavior infraction reporting. When a question was posed regarding a school-wide discipline policy in an effort to standardize what to report to the administration and when, nine of 10 teachers voiced agreement, but stated a "policy of reporting" would still not address the issue

of teacher personality and preference. When describing what discipline infractions are most commonly referred to administration by the focus group, there were a variety of answers. The first answers were for major infractions such as fighting, making threats, inappropriate gestures and movements, vulgarity, profanity, and bigotry. When questioned about the types of infractions the focus group teachers reported, group members with less than seven years of teaching experience, shared the disruption of the learning environment by talking too much, telling "your momma" jokes, and excessive playing resulted in their discipline referral. Other factors in addressing student discipline were: (1) teacher's physical size; (2) teacher tolerance; and (3) classroom dynamics. Teachers noted if their class was full of "high rollers" or male students represented more than half of the classroom population, teachers had difficulty managing the behaviors.

Teacher survey. Faculty members expressed concerns throughout the target school year regarding increased misbehavior among the students of LTES. Extended response questions were solicited to respondents of the teacher survey. Extended responses revealed teachers willingness to implement the PBIS program. One member responded, "Implementing positive behavior support" would be the best solution for our students. After implementation began, the same teacher commented saying the school "recently began implementation and so far it seems to be a big buy-in among the staff and students." Teachers acknowledged the benefits of the PBIS program and began to see excitement among students. When asked what the most important factor in improving school discipline was, another teacher reported, "PBIS has been very successful in dealing with students that misbehave during teaching time."

Teacher interviews. Several teachers volunteered to participate in the PBIS team planning. This group was responsible for the implementation of the program school-wide. The

PBIS team attended trainings, bought or created prizes for teachers and students, developed ideas for rewards, and spent time to plan the events of the target school year. During one session, one teacher responded, "I love being a part of the PBIS team at LTES." Another teacher who was not a member of the PBIS team stated, "I am provided with all the tools needed for a successful school year." Incentives and rewards are implemented with the help of not only the PBIS team members, but also their fellow faculty members. Student misbehavior, though slightly decreased, caused one teacher to make a comparison from the year prior to the PBIS program implementation to the target school year. When asked what the most important factor in improving school discipline was, one teacher remarked, "The most important factor is consistency and fairness. Our school continues to improve in this area." The teacher recognized a need for a consistent system of discipline reporting, expectations, and fairness across all grades.

Certified and non-certified staff expressed a need for positive motivation for students. Faculty members acknowledged the benefits of motivation through rewards and incentives by recognizing some parts were missing in the school-wide behavior plan. Overall, faculty members implemented the PBIS program within their classrooms regularly. Of the 24 classrooms, no classrooms opted out of the daily, monthly, or weekly prizes received. The focus group meeting, teacher survey, and teacher interview findings showed an expressed concern for misbehavior among all students at LTES. The qualitative tools also showed a solution-oriented mindset and a willingness to participate in the implementation of the school-wide program to improve behavior concerns.

CPI Training. Building the confidence of teachers to handle classroom disruptions is seen as a vital component of student success in schools. When teachers feel they can appropriately and effectively diffuse or prevent minor class disruptions from escalating into

major disruptions, both students and teachers can exist in the classroom setting more productively. Though teacher responses during scheduled interviews and surveys indicated confidence in classroom management training and preparation, the number of discipline referrals reported every year point to a disconnect between procedures and incidents of misbehavior. To address this disconnect, the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) offers a two-day training which was held during the summer before the target school year. During the CPI training sessions, a Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI) curriculum was used. The LTES Assistant Principal, also the researcher, served as a trainer for CPI. The school district offered three training sessions for school district personnel during the summer before the target school year. The participation in the training sessions was voluntary, but teachers were allowed to receive continuing educational units (CEUs) for their time. The CEUs were provided upon the successful completion of the training.

On the first day of the CPI training, the emphasis was on proactive interventions during instances of class disruptions and verbal (non-physical) methods of preventing and managing class disruptive behavior. CPI's disengagement skills are practiced and demonstrated individually as well as in groups to prepare teachers and other staff members to safely remove themselves and others from high-risk situations. During the first day, teachers learned the following:

- How to identify behaviors that could lead to a crisis.
- How to most effectively respond to each behavior to prevent the situation from escalating.
- How to use verbal and nonverbal techniques to defuse hostile behavior and resolve a crisis before it can become violent.
- How to cope with their own fear and anxiety.

- How to assess risk levels and consider the issues that impact decision making.

- How to use CPI's disengagement skills to avoid injury if behavior becomes physical.

During the second day, there is an expansion of the crisis intervention methods to include the demonstration, study, and practice of physical interventions. The program emphasizes the use of these skills as a last resort; only to be used when the person acting out is a danger to themselves or others. The topics covered during this session include the following:

- Appropriate time to physically intervene.

- How to develop team intervention strategies and techniques.

- How to assess the physical and psychological well-being of those involved in a crisis.

- A progression of holding skills to manage aggressive behavior in least restrictive, safest manner.

- How to maintain rapport with the individual who is acting out.

- Key steps for debriefing after a crisis.

- How to properly document an incident.

Participants during this session included certified and non-certified staff members. The participants included three assistant teachers, one lead teacher, one counselor, one librarian, one special education teacher, one behavior interventionist, and four building principals. There were 40 participants trained during the summer before the target school year. Of the 40 participants trained during the summer, 12 participated in the session conducted by the researcher. Six out of the 12 participants during the researcher's session held positions at LTES. The six participants expressed an interest in learning to diffuse potentially major class and school disruptions. The CPI participants also stated they were willing to share their experience with other LTES staff.

During both formal and informal observations and as well as conversations throughout the target year, staff members who participated in the CPI training session continued to practice and recall the information presented. Out of the 24 fourth-grade classroom teachers, none were CPI trained. The researcher conducted observations daily. Teacher position and inappropriate teacher behaviors (See Appendix B) were most common in classrooms with students with major discipline referrals. Teachers who stood near the board and moved throughout their classrooms during instruction had fewer than two students with more than three major discipline referrals. Teachers who used a harsh tone or gave no choices when attempting to correct misbehavior not only had more than ten referrals for the classroom but also had at least one student with more than five minor and major discipline referrals. The fourth-grade teacher team (two teachers) which held the most discipline referrals (46), received high student achievement for the past two years. Although not the most popular teachers at LTES, the teacher team has a high rate of student growth annually. Neither teacher from this team attended the training. The fifth-grade teacher team (three teachers) which held the most discipline referrals (274) had eight male chronically misbehaving students. The eight male students were also assigned tiered academic interventions in reading and math. Out of the three teachers on the team, one teacher attended the CPI training. This teacher had the lowest number (46) of reported discipline referrals of the three teachers.

Out of the 1242 discipline referrals reported during the target year, there were no instances in which teachers were required to use physical interventions. The CPI model of interventions is a valuable tool when properly implemented. Teachers who used a calm and respectful tone were able to diffuse minor class disruptions successfully. Most commonly used were nonverbal glances, soft touches on the desk, or saying the students' name in a low tone.

Students who were "called out" in front of peers or shamed, tended to get more upset by crying, balling fists, or escalating by verbally and negatively responding to the teacher. The fifth-grade teacher team was observed as having more instances of this type of behavior.

Research Question Four

What areas of success came about as a result of the implementation process?

      Teacher interviews. Faculty members identified areas of improvement in not only student behavior, but also in teacher implementation. When asked about the incentives offered for LTES students who behaved properly, one teacher responded, "The positive behavior store, the kids love it!" The PBIS store is an option some students used when they saved enough R.O.A.R. tickets. The store is one of three options offered to students for good behavior ticket use. When respondents were asked if the rewards and incentives students were offered were effective in encouraging positive behavior, six faculty members responded with a simple yes. One teacher commented, "Overall, the incentives are encouraging positive behavior but are too infrequent to be very effective. The PBIS goal of working with students in crisis on a daily basis and having check-ins which could include more frequent rewards, still isn't being enforced." Of all the respondents, one teacher responded negatively, "No. The students that really care about getting R.O.A.R. tickets are the ones that would behave anyway. The others don't really care about it." Also, teachers often give them out for academic accomplishments more so than for behavior." This highlighted inconsistencies in how the R.O.A.R. tickets were being used in per classroom. To further answer this question, the individual classroom data was analyzed.

      Discipline reports. There are 24 classroom teachers in LTES. Two additional classrooms were created to address low performing students bringing the total by the end of the year to 26 homeroom classes. The total number of discipline referrals accumulated was 1242 for the target

school year. Of those 1242 discipline referrals, 102 discipline referrals were reported by first or second year teachers. Seventy-eight discipline referrals were reported by special areas teachers. Special area teachers include the librarian, In-School Detention teacher, music teacher, Special Education teacher, Physical Education teacher, and two administrators. Substitute teachers only accounted for 26 of the total number of discipline referrals.

Fourth-grade teachers accounted for 274 total discipline referrals. Of the 14 fourth-grade teachers, four teachers reported over 20 infractions each. The remaining fourth-grade teachers reported under 10 discipline referrals each. Three fifth-grade teachers of the 12 were identified as having the largest number of discipline referrals for the target school year. The three teachers were a part of a teacher team who taught math, science, and reading separately but to the same students. Of the three teachers, one teacher had less than one year of teaching experience. This teacher accounted for 140 of the 274 referrals for the team. This teacher team reported almost 20% of all school discipline referrals. Upon classroom discipline analysis, it was determined that of the 19 students identified as chronically misbehaving students from the previous school year, eight were assigned to this teacher team. This group of eight students accrued 152 of the total 274 discipline referrals reported by the teacher team with 88 referrals coming from the first year teacher in regard to the chronically misbehaving student group. According to the EOY discipline data, there were 14 teachers with less than five referrals for the year. Of the 14 teachers, two had less than one year of teaching experience. The other three fifth-grade teacher teams accrued 66, 32, and 28 total discipline referrals respectively.

Focus Group Meeting. Teachers highlighted successes of the year by stating it was "better than last year." The focus group highlighted a sense of family, fairness, and unity among staff. The focus group members attributed the improvement to the change in school leadership,

the school's lead teacher, and the addition of new staff members with creative ideas. When asked why school year seemed better, teachers responded by saying "we are all in it together," "same rules and expectations," and school "felt more like a family." School unity in establishing common goals and practices, as an approach to a common program, made focus group members feel more involved with school decisions.

When asked about school climate, some teachers responded that although they feel safe in school, they "don't feel well-trained in (classroom) management." Certain focus group members, though not comfortable with handling classroom discipline, indicated they were comfortable with "getting support from school administration." Getting support from peers was also specified when highlighting school progress.

The success rate of the PBIS program implementation deemed successful school staff. One example would be the14 teachers who managed to have under five referrals for the target school year. Successes could also be recognized in the special area teacher population with five of 10 teachers reporting less than five referrals for the target year. A significant portion of discipline referrals were isolated within one teacher team of the four in the fifth-grade. Teachers identified program implementation as an on-going process and were excited about the results as well as peer attitudes target year. Teachers were aware of areas of growth of the school and displayed a willingness to address them in a collaborative manner.

Research Question Five

What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and all male students?

Focus group meeting. Focus group meetings revealed a teacher suggested a need for mentors within the school. Five of 10 teachers offered suggestions for further exploration in

correcting student misbehavior. One teacher stated, "Clubs or groups that kids want to earn membership are needed (sic)." A second teacher responded by saying a "Gentlemen's Club" is needed. A third teacher suggested, "Clubs where boys are taught how to be a man" are needed. The fourth teacher said the school should "take advantage of other areas (in the community) like mentors." The implementation of the G.E.M.S. mentoring program was created as additional support to the PBIS program. The PBIS program was aimed at addressing all school discipline (both girls and boys), while the G.E.M.S. program was specifically created for our male chronically misbehaving student.

G.E.M.S. mentoring program. A mentoring program for girls was also planned. Not only were the male chronically misbehaving students allowed the opportunity to participate, but also female chronically misbehaving students. The additional support of adding a mentoring program to the study provided opportunities for more specific behavior lessons, modeling of behavior in smaller groups, and special activities to enhance the motivation for male students to behave appropriately. The assigned mentors, two male, and two female faculty members were given a school-based mentoring program handbook to use as a guide to establish a curriculum for the program. The curriculum focused on character building, leadership skills, academic motivation, and peer relationships. The teachers met once a month from October 2017 until February of 2018. During the meetings, the handbook was revised for LTES students. A draft of the handbook was submitted to the school district administration for approval. Implementation was slated for August 2018.

The design of this research question aimed to compare the total male student population with the G.E.M.S. program participants. By comparing males who participated in the mentoring program and the total male population who only received PBIS incentives, the researcher would

be able to analyze discipline data to identify the differences in the two groups. At the beginning

of the 2018-2019 SY, several personnel changes were made within the LTES organization. Two

male mentors were assigned to facilitate the G.E.M.S. program. Due to circumstances beyond the

researcher's control, both male teachers were removed from LTES before the target school year

began. One female mentor was also no longer employed at LTES. This personnel change

hampered the development and implementation of the G.E.M.S. program. As a result, the school

district administration delayed the implementation of the G.E.M.S. program indefinitely.

Research Question Six

What is the difference in discipline referrals in male students participating in G.E.M.S. and male

students not participating in G.E.M.S.?

G.E.M.S. mentoring program. This research question is an extension of the Research

Question Five. The goal of the question was to compare male students who are considered

chronically misbehaving students but were not selected to participate in the G.E.M.S. mentoring

program. This comparison would allow the researcher to determine whether the additional

support of the mentoring program had an impact on discipline referrals for male chronically

misbehaving students. Fifteen male students were selected from 30 randomly selected

chronically misbehaving students. Nineteen of the randomly selected male students attended

school at LTES during year prior to the target school year, having been identified from previous

discipline referral data. Of the 30 randomly identified students classified as chronically

misbehaving students, 15 were randomly placed on a list to receive an invitation to the G.E.M.S.

program. The male chronically misbehaving students identified in the experimental group would

receive counseling, mentoring, opportunities for community service, and incentives throughout

the target school year. A meeting was held with the assigned mentors to discuss state assessment

scores, teacher input, knowledge of parental support, and level of severity of discipline

infractions being used to determine student invitation to participate in the program. The targeted

male students in the control group would receive the benefits of the PBIS program, but not

mentoring incentives.

The mentoring program, however promising, did not reach full implementation due to

personnel changes within the LTES organization. The researcher anecdotally identified eight

male chronically misbehaving students who were placed on a list to receive mentoring, continued

a pattern of misbehavior throughout the target school year. Twelve of the chronically

misbehaving students were promoted to sixth-grade, which is housed in a separate building.

Eleven of 30 randomly selected male chronically misbehaving students decreased discipline

referrals for the year. They did not receive additional supports other than the school-wide PBIS

incentives.

Conclusion

Male students who accumulated excessive discipline referrals were offered PBIS supports

and incentives throughout the target school year. Along with all students enrolled, they received

daily, weekly, and monthly incentives for displaying appropriate school behavior. The researcher

had hoped to provide additional supports specifically aimed to address their needs. The inability

of the school to provide the added support hampered the researcher's capacity in effectively

addressing the problem of disproportionate discipline at LTES. Chapter V offers further insight

and implications for further study as well as recommendations by the researcher.

Chapter V

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This applied action research study intends to improve the problem of disproportionate male discipline at Little Tiger Elementary School, develop an action plan which specifically addresses the problem of practice, and improve the overall effectiveness of the organization by building the capacity for collaborative learning. Disproportionate discipline for male students, especially Black males, is observed and have become a reoccurring reality within the public school system. These reports suggest the problem, which many schools may face, is the challenge to meet the social and emotional needs of male students. A focus on educational programs allowing all students to experience a safe, nurturing, and emotionally supportive environment appears merited.

The PBIS program, upon which this study is based, relies specifically on evidence-based practices to support positive student behavior. One of the most important practices is proactive modeling, teaching, and rewarding of appropriate behaviors. Despite this research, the practices and policies implemented throughout the target school year had little impact on End of the Year (EOY) discipline referrals, as reported in Chapter IV. The researcher identified elements within the action plan to aid in answering the central question of the study: Did the action plan result in the 20% decrease of male student discipline referrals within the first year of implementation? As previously stated in Chapter II, archived quantitative data from school district participating in a

study also showed male students within the district received more discipline and harsher consequences than female middle school students (Lukefahr-Farrer, 2014). School leadership and positive behavior reinforcements are also mentioned as being effective in decreasing student misbehavior (Alsubaie, 2015).

Throughout this study, the researcher sought to comprehend the elements affecting male student misbehavior and how this problem could most appropriately be addressed. This misbehavior presents a critical problem, not only to student achievement, but also in community relations, teacher-student relationships, and the overall growth and development of male students.

Researcher Background. This study was implemented during the researcher's fourth year as an administrator at LTES. LTES is an upper elementary school which holds students in the fourth and fifth-grades. The researcher is a Black female in her early forties. Before becoming an administrator, the researcher served as Assistant Athletic Director and Varsity Basketball and Track coach in a neighboring school district. During the researcher's tenure at LTES, school administration changed once before the 2017-2018 SY. After processing an increasing amount of discipline referrals three consecutive school years before the research study, the school administration, along with other key stakeholders, determined the need to address the problem of student misbehavior. After a two-year process of team planning, hiring appropriate school personnel, and identifying explicit goals, the school leadership began the process of PBIS program implementation. It should also be noted, during the time before the implementation of the study, LTES was rated a "D" school in 2016 by the Mississippi State Accountability rating system. The two-year window in addressing the school discipline issue was an issue of priority.

Throughout the researcher's time at LTES, both formal and informal conversations were held with school parents, certified, non-certified, and district administrative staff regarding school issues. The conversations often concluded there was a need for the problem to be addressed. Most solutions offered included In-School Detention, suspension, corporal punishment, or alternative school placement. Hamlet's (2012) study showed teachers were successful with their male students if they understood, bonded, used encouragement, and supported the male students as well as used life skills in their efforts to help them be successful. This and other findings presented in the Literature Review of Chapter II suggested building relationships, modeling appropriate behavior, and providing a male support system impacts male student behavior and a would be a reasonable solution to the LTES problem.

Quantitative review. LTES implemented a school-wide behavior plan to improve the behavior of fourth and fifth-grade male students. The results did not explicitly provide evidence this program was successful in addressing the problem. According to the findings of this study, the targeted goal for the central question was not achieved. Less than one percent change resulted in the overall number of referrals. Chapter IV provides evidence of reduced female incidents of misbehavior in comparison with male student incidents of misbehavior. Although the findings of this study show female students misbehavior decreased during the implementation of the school-wide behavior plan, further examination is needed to determine whether this was a direct result of the plan implementation or due to other factors not addressed in this study. The researcher sought to discover effective variables linked to decreasing student misbehavior by using appropriate teacher responses to male student misbehavior, affirmative male student misbehavior, and collective approach to school discipline.

A *t*-test revealed a lack of significance in results when comparing female student misbehavior to male student misbehavior. Although female student discipline infractions decreased by almost 20%, the *t*-test significance value was calculated at .49 and did not meet the criteria for educational statistical significance. It should be noted a fifth-grade teacher team, which included a first-year teacher, was identified as an outlier. This teacher team accounted for 274 school discipline referrals for the target school year. One first-year teacher within the group reported 170 of the 274 referrals for the target year. After removing the first year teacher, as an outlier, accumulating 170 discipline referrals within the target school year the test of difference was applied once again. The cumulative discipline data for the target school year without the first year teacher included produced the significance value reveals .09. This result does not show statistical significance, but it does however provide a basis for further examination into the success of the PBIS program. The practical significance should not be discounted due to the impact the first year teacher had on the statistical analysis.

LTES accumulated 1,245 discipline referrals in the 2017-2018 SY, prior to the PBIS program implementation. Of the 1,245 discipline referrals, male students represented 869 (69%) of all discipline referrals. During the target school year, utilizing the PBIS program implementation, student discipline referrals decreased to 1242 (-.24%) referrals. Male students represented 940 (75.68%) of the total discipline referral accumulated. The most substantial change in discipline came in the number of incidents in Fighting/Provoking a Fight (-54.55%) and Abusing the Rights of Others (-24.42%). Students were less likely during the target school year to engage in acts of violence via fighting or provoking a fight than in years prior to program implementation. Students were also less likely to hit or kick others, engage in horseplay, or otherwise show physical aggression toward classmates during this time. This data hints at an

overall decrease in student behaviors which can escalate toward major discipline infractions. The decrease provides encouragement for further program implementation. The highest increase in school discipline was in the area of Disruption of a Normal School Day (36.44%). A Disruption of a Normal School Day encompasses (Level Three) infractions which may not specifically be named due to the age of students. This infraction can include, threats, objects which could be considered weapons, objects which can purposefully or accidently cause harm, or a commotion which causes a considerable amount of attention. During the target school year, students were more likely to bring inappropriate materials to the school, such as toy guns, cigarette lighters, and knives than in the previous year. Also, during this time, students were more likely to make threats to their peers or adults within the school.

Qualitative Review. The qualitative data collected during the target school year provided the researcher with ample information. The strategies utilized throughout the study gave teachers the tools needed to place a clear focus on appropriate student behavior and appropriate responses to misbehavior. While the quantitative data did not show statically significant gains, the improvement of school-wide behavior during the initial implementation phase encouraged teacher "buy-in" to the PBIS program. Teachers expressed a desire for change and were a part of the implementation design and process. Through teacher interviews, surveys, formal and informal conversations, and a focus group, the plan was deemed successful, but in need of revision. Teachers enjoyed the incentives both they and the students received. The incentives provided teachers and students the opportunity to build positive relationships with one another both inside and outside of academic realm.

A school-wide focus was placed on learning and modeling the specific attributes of responsibility, ownership, attitude, and respect. School administration placed banners both inside

and outside the school facility to reinforce expectations for parents, students, and teachers. The acronym R.O.A.R. was placed on school letterhead, morning announcements, incentives, rules signage, school paraphernalia, and generic documents used for school promotion. These extra activities, not listed in the action plan, boosted community knowledge and support of the school behavior initiative. Students who fully bought in to the implementation of the PBIS program were rewarded with more opportunities to receive additional prizes and even participate in field trips. The more a student displayed appropriate school behavior, the more tickets they earned. The more tickets they earned, the more opportunities they received to use their tickets for prizes. Students who showed little improvement, or made poor choices in their behavior, did not have their opportunities for prizes taken away but were limited according to the number of tickets accumulated.

Some respondents to the teacher interview indicated a desire to take away opportunities from children who misbehaved. Their need to send a clear message to students and parents stating misbehavior would not be tolerated served as the justification. The proponents of this message were typically veteran teachers or those with established methods of discipline prior to program implementation. The concept of rewarding students for behaving appropriately alone did not motivate teachers to alter their approach to discipline. Despite presenting data from previous years showing the ineffectiveness of the "My-Way-or-The-Highway" approach, the more established teachers were hesitant when implementing the school-wide approach. The PBIS and school leadership teams were instrumental in modeling appropriate staff attitudes, providing assistance, addressing the need of instructional staff, and providing resources to the school body. This created a sense of family within the school and amongst staff. Those who were hesitant

during the initial stages, softened as student misbehavior decreased and program assistance was received.

The action plan data reveals evidence of teachers and students closing the gap in some areas of school discipline. A decline in Level Two infractions indicates many of the students and teachers share the desire to improve school culture through the improvement of behavior. More than a single school year is needed to determine program success. School administration and leadership team members hope to build on the year's successes and learn from drawbacks. Throughout the target year of program implementation, school administration and PBIS and leadership team members met regularly to discuss program successes and adjust implementation in attempts to make more progress. The development of this process is ongoing.

Unexpected Outcomes

Male students were the primary subjects of this study; however, female students were both directly and indirectly impacted by the program implementation. Both male and female students received the benefits of the PBIS program rewards and incentives. Male student discipline did not meet significant results, but female students yielded promising results. Discipline referrals among the school's female student population decreased by 20% overall. Female students were viewed by focus group staff members as needing counseling, support, and security. This feeling the need for help and guidance is reflected in their description of female disruptive behaviors which were described as minor annoyances. The teachers view female students as needing intervention and support rather than discipline. This view is evident in the shift of the teacher's tone shift from frustrated and impatient to dismissive during the focus group meeting. This shift is illustrated in the EOY discipline results. Girls were less likely to

receive a disciplinary referral than male students. Though this was not the goal of the study, this

is a positive outcome from which further research can be expounded.

Next Steps

This applied action research study suggests possible approaches to increase positive male

student behavior and decrease the negative misbehavior occurrences. In addition to providing

additional support and training to teachers, the school administration will continue to promote

positive student behavior. If teaching and rewarding appropriate behaviors equally validated

students' varying cultural identities, the common social culture within the school, built on these

practices, could have greater relevance for all students (Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, and

Swain-Bradway, 2011). Data from this study will be shared with the school administration as

well as the PBIS and school leadership teams to continue the process of setting school goals and

determining next steps. A collaborative effort to make decisions will be used as the plan

continues to develop. A strong recommendation from the researcher is to place a greater

emphasis on male chronically misbehaving students by providing additional training, modeling,

and guidance opportunities for this population.

LTES maintained its PBIS implementation status during the following school year. The

teachers and students will continue to receive rewards and incentives in efforts to maintain a safe

and orderly school environment. Although plans for a male mentoring program have not been

solidified due to additional personnel changes, school administration aims to implement

G.E.M.S. as a future goal for the school. As it relates to staff responses to school discipline,

school administration seeks to incorporate the requirement of teachers with more than five

discipline referrals during the first three months of the school year attending CPI training. They

will attend the refresher course if they have participated in the training previously. The ability of

teachers to deescalate and appropriately manage their classrooms continues to be a goal for school administration.

Additionally, elementary school transitional times remains a focal point. LTES school administration recognizes the transition and communication between higher and lower grades as an area in need of improvement. Communication between school administration and teachers, in which quarterly meetings can be held to discuss common strategies, expectations, assessment preparation, and management plans and ideas, can provide a less stressful environment for both teachers and students. Opportunities for students to visit the school meet their teachers and principals can benefit students both socially and academically. This strategy is in an early implementation stage at the lower grades and the benefits of the new strategy have yet to be discovered. The idea is to form open lines of communication between schools for the success and benefit of those being served; all students.

When analyzing the common themes from the teacher focus group, surveys, and interviews, 90% indicated school administrators were clear in communicating and modeling high expectations for staff and students. Despite this indication, 67% indicate the expectations communicated are not consistently enforced with all students. Teacher opinions and alternatives will be solicited in attempts to bridge the gap in school administration communication and enforcement of behavior goals and expectations.

An additional theme in the teacher surveys indicated 97% (36 of 37) respondents revealed their comfort in the level of training received to address both minor and major discipline infractions. Teachers also uniformly responded that implementation of the training they received was being appropriately used in their classrooms. Despite this response from teachers, discipline reports show increases in minor disciplinary infractions, such as talking

without permission, out of the seat without permission, and refusing to do work. In some cases, the minor infractions were reported as "disruptive classroom behavior." School administration attempted to address this area by providing more research-based class management training, providing more oversight in techniques used, and garnering feedback more consistently from faculty members.

Study Limitations

Preparation and fidelity are vital in conducting research, especially, when done at high levels. Despite best efforts, there were unforeseeable drawbacks during the research design and implementation. In an effort to enhance future studies of this topic, the parameters to which this study was limited are addressed. Among them include researcher bias, personnel changes, and time constraints.

Researcher bias. Researcher bias is the first glaring source of limitation of the study. Since the researcher served in the capacity of school administrator at LTES, both personal and professional investments were steep. Relationships formed with students and teachers could be used to motivate or otherwise incentivize both groups to participate on a larger scale. Although researcher integrity was a priority within this study, personal and professional investments cannot be overlooked. Assumptions may also be made regarding staff attitudes in reporting the discipline of students given the background knowledge of the researcher. The previous experience of the researcher with school staff could impact the researcher's opinion regarding the causes of the discipline problems within the school.

Personnel changes. A critical component of this study was lost due to personnel changes. Teachers, who were essential to the success and implementation of the G.E.M.S. mentoring program, resigned, moved, or departed from LTES before implementation began. The

mentoring program was to serve as a means to develop a more complete picture of the male student at LTES. The voices of all stakeholders important to the success of LTES students were evident in this study. The voices of the male students who the study was designed to assist were absent. Further studies should include a compliment to the PBIS program, a mentoring component to address the specific needs of the student for which the study is based. This necessity arises from the need of male students to internalize the appropriateness of positive behavior in the school setting.

Time constraints. The action study was limited to a single school year. Although there are optimistic signs of program success, a comparison of more than one school year could benefit future studies. Fullan (2018) contends the outcome of change efforts require between three and five years. The results have the potential of influencing buy-in of the parents, teachers, students, and community members. By extending the research and adding the complementary component of the mentoring program, the study provides depth to the topic. Male students need understanding and guidance. An examination within a single school year limits the amount of guidance the male students receive. Further exploration into this topic is the desire of the researcher.

Recommendations

When comparing the discipline outcomes of male students in relation to female students, the level of significance is .49 before removing the outlier and .09 after removing the outlier. Though neither result meets the educational standard for being statically significant, the results provide a solid base for further research. Further investigation into supports provided to male students determined to be chronically misbehaving students and their teachers is needed. Variables related to school-wide approaches to gender-specific outcomes should also be

examined. Along with the recommendations mentioned above, the following recommendations focus on three specific areas in which this study could improve.

Male role models. The researcher intended to provide male students, who were identified as chronically misbehaving students, with additional supports. The G.E.M.S. mentoring program presented in Chapter III would serve as a reinforcement to the school-wide behavior approach. The male students identified accumulated similar behavior referrals which caused an unhealthy view of the school and the teachers who instructed them. The mentoring program would provide more opportunities to see adults as allies in their educational experience.

During the focus group session and subsequent teacher interviews, the teachers expressed a desire for the school to start a "Gentleman's Club." A teacher proposed this as an approach used at her previous school in which boys were chosen by staff members to participate in an elite boys club. The group dressed up in shirts and ties every Thursday and received a special lunch. They took field trips, invited family members to campus for a school function, offered community outreach, and participated in afterschool enrichment activities. By offering this enhancement to the school-wide approach to discipline, the program is made more specific to male students by targeting those individuals responsible for repeated disruptive acts within the school.

An addition to this concept, it was decided resources from within the school district could be utilized. Along with soliciting community resources such as churches and business owners, for mentorship, connections with older and more successful students could be generated. High school and junior high students could serve as mentors, tutors, or motivational speakers. Incentives or community service credits for participation could be offered to the older students in exchange for their time and expertise. Karcher's (2008) study of a randomized school-based mentoring program reported results among elementary school boys, particularly those in the

mentoring treatment group, reported higher social skills (empathy and cooperation), hopefulness, and connectedness both to school and to culturally different peers. By mentoring male students in their early years, the potential to improve overall male student behavior outcomes is improved. This recommendation provides an opportunity for both mentor and protégé to engage in positive school experiences. This opportunity also creates more accountability and shared responsibility with regard to school behavior outcomes.

Extracurricular activities. This suggestion offers a lighter aspect of the school-wide approach. In the lower grades, pre-school through third grade in particular, the students are able to perform in school concerts, celebrate sporadic events, and participate in exciting school activities. These programs provide engaging and collaborative experiences for the students and their families. Extracurricular activities increase school participation and achievement because it facilitates: (a) the acquisition of interpersonal skills and positive social norms; (b) membership in prosocial peer groups; and (c) stronger emotional and social connections to one's school (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). The academic focus shifts as students get older, creating fewer opportunities for social stimulation and introducing students to a more stressful environment. Due to this shift, a demand for a more mature and focused student is essential. Students are expected to learn for learning's sake rather than enjoy the process. Extracurricular activities have been reported to show promise in students from low-income homes. Interactions of extracurricular activities with socioeconomic status show less-privileged children benefit more from participation in activities than do more-privileged children (Dumais, 2006). Examples include opportunities for students to display talent via art shows, in which no instructional time is lost. Another example would be Science or Technology competitions held on the school's campus during weekends. There are opportunities for the school to become proactive in seeking

out potential activities for the student body to engage positively with teachers and their peers which do not draw from classroom instructional time.

Teacher training. An understanding of student culture and mindsets could be a missing piece of the puzzle. When addressing the behavior, attitude, reaction, and action of a student's behavior toward an adult within their school, other factors often play into the end result. While both male and female students share in misbehavior such as inattention during instruction, regulating emotions, and difficulty forming relationships with peers and teachers, male students are more likely to be disciplined for this type of behavior. Understanding those aspects and utilizing strategies to impact students in a positive way would be a beneficial component of this study. Due to time constraints, the researcher was not able to delve into further actions which would improve student behavior other than those presented in the action plan presented in Chapter III. This section provides the researcher with the opportunity to present ideal approaches to a complex issue.

Osher, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) suggest racial and cultural disparities in services and discipline indicate the need for cultural and linguistic competence and responsiveness. Chronically misbehaving students' needs may require more intensive supports. Without the necessary supports, their behavior could impact the school, the teachers, and their peers in detrimental ways. The impact may lead to adverse reactions from teachers and students creating a potentially harmful school environment. School administration should develop a detailed approach to understanding the circumstances which inspire such behavior and provide a solution based on the comprehension of the conditions. A cultural response to school discipline encourages teachers to include certain aspects of the students' culture within the learning process. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an approach suggested during the focus group

session. CRT was presented as an approach from which the teachers felt they would benefit the most. White female teachers represent 87.5% of the total teacher population at LTES. The student body is comprised of 64% Black/African American, 33% White/Caucasian, and three percent Hispanic, Asian, or one or more races. Since teacher population does not reflect the demographics of the student population, there is room for mistrust, misunderstanding, and, in some cases, bias. A "refusal to follow directions" might be due to culturally conditioned perceptions of what constitutes and does not constitute a command, "talking back" might simply be an expression of a culturally-specific communication style, and what is "socially rude" varies from culture to culture. Involving stakeholders from different backgrounds in operationally defining inappropriate behaviors could minimize cultural bias (Vincent et al., 2011).

CPI training sessions are recommended as refresher courses on a yearly basis. LTES administration refresher courses are offered voluntarily. Teachers with classroom management concerns are strongly urged to attend, but will not be mandatory. Supports were given throughout the target school year in addition to CPI training, such as peer observations, administrator feedback, and a classroom management seminar.

Conclusion

The possibilities to address the disproportionate discipline at LTES could not all be explored within this single study. Identifying organizational weaknesses and developing an action plan to address those weaknesses was only accomplished with the cooperation and expertise of those who served on the PBIS and school leadership teams. School often responds to disruptive students with exclusionary and punitive approaches which have limited value (Osher et.al., 2010). LTES set out to change the trajectory of this pattern within the school. The data presented in this study holds a mirror to the school to determine whether or not it is meeting the

needs of all the students for which it is responsible. Though male student misbehavior increased during the target year of PBIS implementation, the feedback provided by teachers illuminates the hope of the action plan leading the school in a positive direction. Teachers and administration are working together to continue to address a problem within the school. Any program implemented would require more than a single year to be successful. Teachers have indicated a belief in the program and a willingness to continue on the journey initiated which should produce an improved trajectory. The daily, weekly, and monthly incentives provided to both students and teachers excitement and collaboration in an otherwise stressful environment. When implementing a similar action plan within other school locations, it is the recommendation of the researcher to make the planning process ongoing and encourage dynamic conversations among team members. The action plan will attain the greatest success through honest and continuous dialogue. Improvements to the return on the investment of student and teacher relationships can be achieved through fidelity, consistency, and individual growth.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Teacher Interview Questions

<u>Research Topic</u>: *Male discipline disproportionality at Little Tiger Elementary School*

<u>Specific Research Question</u>: *What is the impact of the PBIS program on male student discipline?*

<u>Conceptual Frameworks</u>: *gender discipline disproportionality, male student misbehavior, teacher-student relationships*

Statement of Consent:

This interview is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree Amy Katrise Sutton from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of positive rewards and incentives on male student misbehavior in upper elementary school. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:

asutton@spanola.net
aksutton@go.olemiss.edu

Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Dennis Bunch, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:

dbunch@olemiss.edu; (662)915-7551 (office)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your experiences as an educator handling male misbehavior. The information you supply will assist us in the implementation of supports to male students and teachers for long term growth and development within our organization. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly. With that being said, are you willing to proceed with the interview?

Ice Breaker:
    1. How is the school year going so far?

2. What is your favorite part about working at LTES?

Background Information:
  1. How long have you been teaching/working in education?
  2. How long have you been teaching/working at LTES?
  3. What is the gender make up of your classroom?

Discipline Reporting
  1. How do you handle discipline?
  2. What types of infractions do you report?
       a. How do you decide what to report?
       b. What infractions do you report most commonly?
  3. How do you handle a possible mismatch with student personality when it negatively impacts their school behavior?

Gender Disparities
  1. How do males students generally behave in your class?
       a. What behaviors are seen as disruption?
       b. What are your expectations?
  2. How do female students generally behave in your classroom?
       a. What behaviors are seen as disruptive?
       b. What are your expectations?

School Climate
  1. Do you feel safe and secure teaching at LTES?
  2. Are school expectations for student behavior properly communicated?
  3. What incentives does LTES offer to correct student behavior?
  4. In your opinion, are these incentives, if offered, effective in encouraging positive student behavior?

Classroom Management Training
  1. Are you adequately trained to handle minor classroom disruptions?
  2. Are you adequately trained to handle major classroom disruptions?
  3. Have you been offered the opportunity to attend classroom management or proactive trainings? If so, how have you used them in the performance of your job duties?
  4. Have you sought out opportunities for classroom management or proactive trainings? If so, how have you used them in the performance of your job duties?

Closing
  1. Do you have any suggestions for LTES regarding ways to improve male student misbehavior?

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST

Classroom Observation Checklist

Statement of Consent:

This observation is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree Amy Katrise Sutton from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of positive rewards and incentives on male student misbehavior in upper elementary school. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:

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The researcher will observe classrooms within the school no less than four times throughout the year. The school leadership team will conduct meetings with the researcher only being an observer. The researcher will note the participants and the events by taking field notes. Upon completion of the meeting, the researcher will use the observation checklist for data collection.

Classroom Observation Checklist

Steps	Evidence (check all which apply)
Number of Students	_____
Time of Day	_____
Date	_____
Teacher Position	A. Standing in front near board B. Mobile C. Sitting at desk D. Sitting instructing from multimedia E. Other
Student Engagement	A. All students appear engaged B. Some students appear engaged (less than 70%) C. A few students appear engaged (less than 50%) D. Little to no students appear engaged (less than 20%)
Inappropriate student behaviors observed	A. Talking out of turn B. Walking without permission C. Verbal abuse D. Sudden outburst of anger towards teacher or classmate E. Sleeping/Head down F. Other: _____
Inappropriate teacher behaviors observed	A. Unequal treatment of behavior B. Ridicule, embarrassing student C. Gives no choices D. Non-observant (back to class, head down, etc) E. Harsh tone F. Other: _____

Student Survey Questions

Statement of Consent:

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dbunch@olemiss.edu; (662)915-7551 (office)

This survey will be used to provide information to help us understand your perception of discipline and behavior management in our school. Protecting your rights is of the utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you will find statements regarding behavior management and school discipline. Please give the descriptive questions. Answer the remaining questions by checking yes or no.

Student Survey Questions

1. What is your gender?
   o Male
   o Female
2. During the school year, I have received the following number of discipline referrals:
   o 0
   o 1-3
   o 4-9
   o 10 or more
3. If I have received a discipline referral, the most common reason is:
   o Talking
   o Disrespect
   o Hitting/Touching others
   o Out of seat
   o I have not received a referral
4. During the current and previous school year have you ever:
   a. Been suspended   No_____ Yes _____
   b. Been sent to Alternative School   No_____ Yes _____
   c. Been expelled   No_____ Yes _____
5. Do you think your choices impact learning?   No_____ Yes _____

School Climate

6. Do you feel safe in your classroom?   No_____ Yes _____
7. Do you feel safe at LTES?   No_____ Yes _____
8. Do you or your classmates misbehave frequently?   No_____ Yes _____

Teacher-Student Relationships

9. Do you trust your teacher?   No_____ Yes _____
10. Is your teacher a fair person in your opinion?   No_____ Yes _____
11. Do you like your teacher?   No_____ Yes _____
12. Do you consider your classroom fun or engaging?   No_____ Yes _____
13. Are you ever bored?   No_____ Yes _____
14. Has your teacher ever asked your opinion regarding classroom rules or procedures?
                          No_____ Yes _____

Teacher Survey Questions

Statement of Consent:

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This survey will be used to provide information to help us understand your perception of discipline and behavior management in our school. Protecting your rights is of the utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you will find statements regarding behavior management and school discipline. Please indicate the frequency of activities and behaviors in the school during the current school year. Please mark only one choice in each row.

Teacher Survey Questions

Please read each statement and think about the way things are in your school.	Not Typical (1)	Somewhat Typical (2)	Very Typical (3)
1. The present discipline system seems fair (not too harsh or lenient).	○	○	○
2. School staff use discipline strategies to promote positive when there is a behavior problem with a student.	○	○	○
3. When there is a discipline infraction, consequences are enforced consistently for all students.	○	○	○
4. School staff help students take responsibility for their actions.	○	○	○
5. Adults help make sure students don't get bullied or harassed.	○	○	○
6. School staff believes that all students can be successful.	○	○	○
7. All students are treated with respect by peers.	○	○	○
8. All students are treated with respect by staff.	○	○	○
9. Students are taught and encouraged to use effective social, conflict resolution, and coping skills (respect for others, anger and stress management, effective communication, etc.)	○	○	○
10. Teachers and administrators show high expectations for all student by modeling appropriate school behavior.	○	○	○

Optional: In your opinion, what is the most important factor in improving your school's discipline? How has your school succeeded/failed in this area?

APPENDIX E: MENTOR OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Mentor Observation Checklist

Statement of Consent:

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Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Dennis Bunch, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:

dbunch@olemiss.edu; (662)915-7551 (office)

The mentor will observe classrooms of students participating in the mentor program. The subcommittee will conduct meetings in collaboration with the researcher. The mentors will note the participants and the events by taking field notes. Upon completion of the meeting, the researcher will use the observation checklist for data collection.

Mentor Observation Checklist

Steps	Evidence (check all which apply)
Time of Day	_____
Date	_____
Focus Behavior	_____
Teacher Position	A. Standing in front near board B. Mobile C. Sitting at desk D. Sitting instructing from multimedia E. Other
Participating Student Engagement	A. On task upon class entrance B. Responding to teacher questions C. Asking relevant questions D. Working in cooperative groups E. Working independently F. Other: _____
Inappropriate student behaviors observed	G. Talking out of turn H. Walking without permission I. Verbal abuse J. Sudden outburst of anger towards teacher or classmate K. Sleeping/Head down L. Other: _____

Teacher Focus Group Questions

Statement of Consent:

This focus group is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree Amy Katrise Sutton from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of positive rewards and incentives on male student misbehavior in upper elementary school. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:

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Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Dennis Bunch, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:

dbunch@olemiss.edu; (662)915-7551 (office)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your experiences as an educator handling male misbehavior. The information you supply will assist us in the implementation of supports to male students and teachers for long term growth and development within our organization. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly. With that being said, are you willing to proceed in participation in the focus group?

Ice Breaker:
1. How is the school year going so far?
2. What is your favorite part about working at LTES?

Background Information:

3. How long have you been teaching/working in education?
4. How long have you been teaching/working at LTES?
5. What is the gender make up of your classroom?

Discipline Reporting

6. How do you handle discipline?
7. What types of infractions do you report?
8. How do you decide what to report?
9. What infractions do you report most commonly?
10. How do you handle a possible mismatch with student personality when it negatively impacts their school behavior?

Gender Disparities

11. How do males students generally behave in your class?
    a. What behaviors are seen as disruption?
    b. What are your expectations?
12. How do female students generally behave in your classroom?
    a. What behaviors are seen as disruptive?
    b. What are your expectations?

School Climate

13. Do you feel safe and secure teaching at LTES?
14. Are school expectations for student behavior properly communicated?
15. What incentives does LTES offer to correct student behavior?
16. In your opinion, are these incentives, if offered, effective in encouraging positive student behavior?

Classroom Management Training

17. Are you adequately trained to handle minor classroom disruptions?
18. Are you adequately trained to handle major classroom disruptions?
19. Have you been offered the opportunity to attend classroom management or proactive trainings? If so, how have you used them in the performance of your job duties?
20. Have you sought out opportunities for classroom management or proactive trainings? If so, how have you used them in the performance of your job duties?

Closing

21. Do you have any suggestions for LTES regarding ways to improve male student misbehavior?

APPENDIX G: LTES DISCIPLINARY REFERRAL FORM

Student Name: _____ Date: _____ Time/Period: _____
Person Reporting: _____ Grade:_____ Location: _____

DISCIPLINARY INFRACTION

Level One:
- ☐ Tardiness
- ☐ Running/excessive noise
- ☐ Public Display of Affection
- ☐ In an Unauthorized Area
- ☐ Dress Code Violation
- ☐ Electronic Device
- ☐ Loitering in halls, restrooms, etc.
- ☐ Disruptive Behavior
- ☐ Refusing to do classwork

Level Two:
- ☐ Skipping Class (did not leave school grounds)
- ☐ Defiance/Insubordination
- ☐ Disrespect
- ☐ Profanity/Vulgarity (minor/indirect)
- ☐ False Information (dishonesty, lying)
- ☐ Gambling
- ☐ Tobacco Use/Possession (including electronic cigarettes)
- ☐ Possession of Cigarette Lighter
- ☐ Minor Defacing School Property (no repairs needed)
- ☐ Abusing the Rights of Others (arguing, pushing, hitting, horse-playing, being confrontational)

Level Three:
- ☐ Disruption Of Normal School Day
- ☐ Fighting
- ☐ Provoking a Fight
- ☐ Assault
- ☐ Theft
- ☐ Bullying
- ☐ Violation of No Contact Contract
- ☐ Vandalism (property damage)
- ☐ Gang Activity
- ☐ Leaving Campus w/o Permission
- ☐ Major/Direct Profanity
- ☐ Threatening (verbal, physical or electronic threats)
- ☐ Sexual Harassment/Misconduct
- ☐ Possession/Use of Illegal Drugs or Alcohol
- ☐ Possession of Weapons
- ☐ Other_____

Witness: _____
Counselor: _____
Parent: _____
Student: _____

Level One Interventions & Date (2 are required):
- ☐ Conference with Student (Date:_____)
- ☐ Changed Seating Assignment (Date:_____)
- ☐ Writing Assignment (Date:_____)
- ☐ Parent Contact (Date: _____)
- ☐ Other_____

Description of Infraction/Incident:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Disciplinary Action Taken:
- ☐ Warning
- ☐ Administrative/Student Conference
- ☐ Referred to Guidance Counselor
- ☐ Parent Conference
- ☐ Detention
- ☐ ISD
- ☐ OSS
- ☐ Conditional Suspension(Required Parent Conference)
- ☐ Corporal Punishment

Administration Comments:
_____
_____
_____

Administrator:

_____

VITA

Amy K. Sutton

EDUCATION

Ed.D., Educational Leadership, 2019, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

M.A., Curriculum & Instruction, 2004, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

B.S., Elementary Education, 2001, Alcorn State University, Alcorn State, MS

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Principal, Batesville Elementary School, Batesville, MS October 2018 - present

Assistant Principal, Batesville Middle School, July 2015 - October 2018

Assistant Athletic Director, Lafayette High School, July 2012 - June 2014

Head Varsity Basketball Coach, Lafayette High School, July 2006 - June 2014

Head Varsity Track Coach, Lafayette High School, July 2005 - June 2014

HONORS AND AWARDS

2014 2-4A Track State Championship

2012 Mississippi Association of Coaches All Star Coach

2010 & 2011 Region 2-4A Basketball Champions

2010 Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal Coach of the Year

2009, 2010, 2011, & 2012 Region 2-4A Track Champions

2008 Northeast MS. Basketball Coaches Association Coach of the Year

2007 Named Northeast MS. Basketball Coaches Association All-Star Coach

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

National Association of Professional Women (NAPW)

Mississippi Association of Coaches (MAC)

Northeast Mississippi Basketball Coaches Association (NEMBCA)

Women's Basketball Coaching Association (WBCA)

Ole Miss Rotary Club