TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this dissertation is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This dissertation does not include proprietary or classified information.

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

Beverly Pearson Price

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

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VITA

Beverly Pearson Price, daughter of Janet Jones and the late Robert Pearson, was born October 20, 1965, in Dadeville, Alabama. She graduated from Faulkner University with a Bachelor of Science in Management of Human Resources in 1996. She worked as Financial Aid Assistant at Central Alabama Community College from 1996 until 1999. In 1999 she began teaching in the Tallapoosa County School System where she taught for four years. She received her Masters of Education in Elementary Education in 2002 from Auburn University at Montgomery. In 2003 she moved to the Alexander City School System to serve as Assistant Principal. In 2005 she received the degree of Educational Specialist from Auburn University at Montgomery in Educational Leadership. In 2006 she entered the Cooperative Doctoral Program at Auburn University. She is now the Principal of William L. Radney School in the Alexander City School System in Alexander City, Alabama. She is married to Richard L. Price and they have two children, Brooke and Brandy.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPSON SCHOOL CLIMATE

Beverly Pearson Price

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Improvement in student achievement is the object of increased accountability measures in public education. Teachers often enter the classroom feeling unprepared to teach the diverse populations that arrive at school each day. Discipline concerns and lack of classroom management skills often hinder teachers from increasing student achievement levels. This study investigated the role of professional development activities that focused on teacher-student relationships and improved school climate as a resource to further empower teachers to move students toward optimal student achievement. The lack of research on this topic lead the researcher to consider the following research questions: (1) What is the relationship between professional

development activities to improve classroom management and teacher-student relationships?; (2) To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?; (3) To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?; (4) To what extent have professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data that was collected from the completion of the *Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate Survey.* The survey also included three open-ended questions that yielded themes that emerged from the responses. Statistically significant data revealed that effective professional development practices impacted the perceptions of teachers regarding the presence of teacher-student relationships that would lead to improved school climate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to each of you. I thank you for the many hours of support that you have given me. To my major professor, Dr. Maria M. Witte, thank you for your ever encouraging attitude. Your professionalism and scholarly demeanor has been an excellent role model for me. Thank you for not accepting anything but my best and believing in me when I did not. Dr. Margaret Ross, I thank you for your statistical and analytical expertise. Without your guidance I could not have mastered the statistical maze. To Dr. Robert Meadows, you have been a mentor and friend. I thank you for allowing me to make mistakes and helping me to find the error of my ways.

This dissertation is dedicated to my greatest supporter, my husband, Richard Price. You have always encouraged me to complete this scholarly journey and you have provided the necessary support for me to do so. Words can not express, nor numbers define the depth of my indebtedness to you. You have been my mentor, friend, caretaker and soul-mate in the best of times and the worst of times. To my daughters, Brooke and Brandy, this is for you as much as it is for me. I hope that my endeavor will instill in you the importance of the quest for knowledge and that it will create in you the desire to attain as much education as you can. To my mother, thank you for your guidance throughout my lifetime and for your ever encouraging attitude. Above all, I thank my Father and Savior Jesus Christ for the talents with which he has blessed me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"*The secret in education lies in respecting the student.*"
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Overview

Each year Phi Delta Kappa, in conjunction with Gallup poll, measures the attitude of the American public toward the effectiveness of public schools in America. Each year the poll asks the participants to state what they feel is the biggest problem the schools in their communities face (Rose & Gallup, 2005). Discipline topped the list for the first sixteen years of the poll and has remained near the top in recent years (Rose & Gallup, 2005). School discipline continues to be one of the greatest challenges in education as identified by both educators and the public at large and is cosidered one of the most persistent problems faced by schools (Nelson, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 2005). Recent calls to improve school safety and discipline procedures have escalated in part, as a reaction to increased attention to incidences of school violence, such as the shootings at Columbine High School (Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, Gately, Bell, & Muscott, 2004).

Discipline problems have led to anxiety and uncertainty, teacher stress, burnout, and teachers developing an inability to care about students (Almeida, 1995; Chelmynski, 1996; Schottle & Peltier, 1991). Lewis (1999) surmised that teachers frequently report experiences of disciplined-related stress when attempting to manage student misbehavior.

Teachers also reported that holding the belief that they can effectively educate their students increased their willingness to persevere through challenging tasks (Bandura, 1993).

Geiger (2000) listed acts of defiance, such as disrespectful behavior and disobedience, as one of the top three discipline problems most frequently encountered in the classroom. Teachers use the formulation of rules and clear expectations as the foundation of their classroom management programs (Geiger, 2000). McArthur (2002) warns that teachers cannot assume that students will automatically act in an acceptable manner just because that is what adults expect. Geiger (2000) further warns that rules alone will not stop misbehavior unless they are integrated within a positive and warm classroom atmosphere. Teachers who care and respect their students create an environment that maximizes learning (Geiger, 2000). Johnson (1994) contended that the proper balance between warmth and discipline is often hard to find, especially by novice teachers.

Educating the diverse populations of students enrolled in today's schools is an ever increasing challenge (Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001). Baker (2005) pointed out that today's educators are asked, and in many instances mandated, to meet the needs of a diverse group of students, including those with emotional and behavioral disorders. More students are culturally diverse, have English as a second language, are less prepared to enter school, and have a greater range of learning and behavioral challenges (Knitzer, 1993).

Educators have been examining the need to provide different classroom instruction to better meet diverse learning needs for decades. Baker (2005) contends that

such accommodations must extend beyond the academic realm and into the behavioral realm if students with emotional behavior disorders are to be provided an equal educational opportunity. The existing literature suggests that since there is no one panacea for addressing problem behavior in all its variability, effective school-wide (classroom) approaches must consist of a broad range of strategies and sustained attention to multiple systems of intervention (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 1999; Walker, Horner, Sugai, Bullis, Sprague, Bricker & Kaufman, 1996). Walker & Shea (1998) acknowledged that it is valuable to have a wide repertoire of options when dealing with a wide variety of student needs, because no single intervention is effective with all children or in all circumstances.

Baker (2005) ascertained that teachers who are trained to use different strategies, both instructional and disciplinary, may be more ready to educate a variety of learners. When teachers stress social skills in the classroom and create a climate of cooperation and respect for others, there are fewer discipline problems and less negative behavior (McArthur, 2002). McCloud (2005) contends that when they feel honored and safe, students stop misbehaving, and when students stop misbehaving, teachers have more time to focus on teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the literature in support of and in refute of discipline programs agree that students need to feel connected to the school and teachers and share a positive relationship with the adults in the school (Brown, 2005; Deiro, 2003; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Gable, Hester, Hendrickson, & Sze, 2005; Geiger, 2000; Handley, 2002; and Payne, 1996). Mendler and Curwin (1999) wrote:

> We cannot change children in a positive manner by throwing them away. The only way to change children is by bringing them closer to us. We must make them part of our group because when they are not, there is no incentive for them to follow our rules. (p. 9)

Mendler and Curwin (1999) further showed that difficult youth who succeed are surrounded by supportive adults and peers who find ways of communicating that the person, and who he or she is, is more important than any misbehavior.

Research Problem

During the 2004/2005 school year, administrators at a southeastern rural High School processed over 1,500 office discipline referrals (Alabama State Department of Education, 2005). These office discipline referrals resulted in lost instructional time for both teachers and students. The majority of these office discipline referrals were initiated by a small group of students and written by a small group of teachers. This finding is consistent with current research as Payne indicated that ninety percent of discipline referrals will come from ten percent of students and eighty percent of discipline referrals come from eleven percent of teachers (Payne, 2006). These numbers were similar as at the four other schools within the school district.

At a time when school systems are mandated to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), it is imperative that this lost instructional time be recaptured. While there is a large body of research focused on effective discipline programs and their components, there is little research that focuses on how professional development affects the strategies chosen by teachers to manage misbehavior in the classroom. Further, much of the research advocates the importance of teacher-student relationships in both effective classroom management and greater student achievement (Muscott, et. al., 2004).

Marzano (2003a) asserted that if teachers and students do not feel safe, they will not have the necessary psychological energy for teaching and learning (Marzano, 2003a). He further added that without a minimum level of safety and order, a school has little chance of positively affecting student achievement (Marzano, 2003a).

In this specific school system it is evident multiple, differentiated methods of classroom management were not being utilized. Professional development focused on instructional methods and strategies and their contributions to student achievement; however, no attention was given to disciplinary methods and strategies and how their effective use could lead to increased instructional time and increased student achievement. Teacher-student relationships were present, but not with all students. This study focused on how increased professional development activities, aimed at emphasizing to teachers the importance of fostering positive teacher-student relationships, would improve school climate and in turn increase instructional time for both teachers and students.

Purpose of the Study

Understanding why certain populations of students receive office discipline referrals in greater numbers than others, which result in lost instructional time, is important in this age of accountability. This study considers the importance of the role of professional development in effecting the fostering of teacher-student relationships and how both of these affect the perceptions of teachers concerning school climate. The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between the professional development activities provided for teachers and the perceived teacher-student relationships present

after teachers participated in these activities. This study attempted to achieve this goal by answering four research questions.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Professional Development activities to improve classroom management and teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?
3. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?
4. To what extent have professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

Significance of the Study

This study focused on how increased professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the fostering of teacher-student relationships and their affect on classroom management and school climate. There was lack of research examining the relationship between professional development, teacher-student

relationships, and school climate and this study sought to address this gap in the literature.

Teachers frequently report experiences of discipline-related stress when attempting to manage student behavior (Lewis, 1999). This study was significant in that it determined if increased professional development provided strategies for teachers to use when attempting to manage student behavior that would lead to a reduction in stress, burnout, uncertainty, and teachers leaving the field. Teachers face a diverse group of students everyday, both intellectually and behaviorally. It is valuable for teachers to have a wide repertoire of options when dealing with a wide variety of student needs (Walker & Shea, 1998). Teachers who are trained to use different strategies, both instructional and disciplinary, may be more ready to educate a variety of learners (Baker, 2005). This study determined whether professional development activities led to teachers fostering relationships with all of their students and expanded their use of varied strategies to manage student behavior. Thus, the concept of differentiating general classroom management expectations and specialized behavior intervention techniques to better meet the needs of varied learners was one worthy of investigation (Baker, 2005).

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

1. This study was limited to the faculty of the five schools within the Alexander City School System.

2. This study represents data from one school system in east-central Alabama; therefore, generalization beyond the five schools within the Alexander City School System should be undertaken with caution.
3. This study was limited to data that involved two years of professional development activities.
4. This study was limited to information gained from the responses of faculty members to the author-created survey.
5. This study had the potential to be limited by the fact that the researcher was a primary presenter for the professional development activities to improve classroom management and an administrator in the public school system.
6. This study has the potential to be limited because the participants in this study were volunteers and could be teachers that had a positive perception of the professional development activities to improve classroom management.

Assumptions

1. The faculty members responding to the survey will understand the self-administering instructions and the faculty members will answer truthfully.
2. Faculty members will not collaborate on their responses to the survey.
3. Faculty member responses to questions about their perceptions of the presence of teacher-student relationships will reflect their own individual perceptions.
4. Faculty member responses to questions about their perceptions of school climate will reflect their own individual perceptions.

Definition of Terms

*Classroom Management***.** The process by which a teacher manages the behaviors within a classroom. This includes both punishment and praise and rewards. Discipline systems may utilize either positive or negative strategies, or both.

*Discipline Program***.** Procedures used by a school to maintain a positive school climate and manage student behavior in the school. This program may utilize either positive or negative strategies, or both.

*Discipline with Dignity***.** A discipline program introduced by Mendler and Curwin (1999). This program is based on mutual respect between teachers and students, positive relationships between teachers and students, and the quest for understanding why students misbehave.

*Misbehavior***.** Behaviors that are considered inappropriate in a class/school setting.

*Office Discipline Referral***.** Written account of student behavior that is given to an administrator. The administrator uses the written account to determine the appropriate disciplinary actions to assign the student.

*Professional Development Activities***.** Those activities that contains rigorous and relevant content, strategies and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers. (USDE, 1996). The professional development activities referred to in this study were those provided with the objective of improving classroom management.

School Climate. A reflection of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the members of the school (Stevens, 2002), the social and professional interactions of the individuals in the school (Kuperminc, Leadeater, & Blatt, 2001), and the teachers' and students'

perceptions of their school environment, including the physical building and the materials used for instruction (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996).

*Teacher-Student Relationship***.** The interactions between a teacher and student that involves the exchange of caring and respect (Jones, 1987).

Organization of the Study

Chapter I provides a general overview of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, assumptions, delimitations, and definition of the terms. Chapter II provides a discussion of the relevant literature regarding characteristics of effective discipline programs, the importance of caring relationships, the importance of mutual respect between teachers and students, disciplinary styles preferred by teachers and students, and the effects of discipline (effective and ineffective) on student achievement. Chapter III recounts the methods and procedures used in the study, including the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapter IV gives a report of the findings of the study. Chapter V concludes with a summary of the study, conclusions drawn, implications, and recommendations for areas of further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"*The people who influence you are the people who believe in you.*"
Henry Drummond

Introduction

Understanding why certain populations of students receive office discipline referrals in greater numbers than others, which result in lost instructional time, is important in this age of accountability. This study considers the importance of the role of professional development in effective discipline programs and classroom management strategies, the role of teacher-student relationships in effective discipline programs and classroom management, and how both of these affect the perceptions of teachers concerning school climate. The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between the professional development activities provided for teachers to improve classroom management and the perceived teacher-student relationships present after teachers participated in these activities; and their effect on school climate. This study attempted to achieve this goal by answering four research questions. This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Professional Development activities to improve classroom management and teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?

3. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

Background

The attitude of the American public toward the effectiveness of public schools in America is measured each year. America's attitude toward public education and its effectiveness is measured by Phi Delta Kappa in conjunction with a Gallup poll. The poll asks participants what they feel is the biggest problem the schools in their communities face (Rose & Gallup, 2005). For the first sixteen years discipline in schools was at the top of the list and it has remained near the top of the poll in recent years (Rose & Gallup, 2005). Both educators and the public at large see school discipline as one of the greatest challenges and most persistent problems faced by schools today (Nelson, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Recent calls to improve school safety and discipline procedures have escalated in part, as a reaction to increased attention to incidences of school violence, such as the shootings at Columbine High School (Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, Gately, Bell, & Muscott, 2004).

Teacher anxiety and uncertainty, stress, burnout and the development by teachers of an inability to care about students, are all heightened by discipline problems (Almeida, 1995; Chemlynski, 1996; Schottle & Peltier, 1991). Lewis (1999) surmised that teachers frequently report experiences of disciplined-related stress when attempting to manage

student misbehavior. Bandura (1993) reported that teachers that hold the belief that they can effectively educate their students increased their willingness to persevere through challenging tasks.

One of the top three discipline problems encountered in the classroom is defiance. Geiger (2000) pointed out that teachers use the formulation of rules and clear expectations as the foundation of their classroom management programs to address such acts of defiance as disrespectful behavior and disobedience. McArthur (2002) warns that teachers cannot assume that students will automatically act in an acceptable manner just because that is what adults expect. When rules are integrated within a positive and warm classroom atmosphere they are more effective in stopping misbehavior (Geiger, 2000). Geiger (2000) concluded that when teachers care for and respect their students they create an environment that maximizes learning. Johnson (1994) believed that the proper balance between warmth and discipline is often hard to find, especially by novice teachers.

Educating the diverse populations of students enrolled in today's schools is an ever increasing challenge (Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001). Baker (2005) pointed out that today's educators are asked, and in many instances mandated, to meet the needs of a diverse group of students, including those with emotional and behavioral disorders. More students are culturally diverse, have English as a second language, are less prepared to enter school, and have a greater range of learning and behavioral challenges (Knitzer, 1993).

Educators have been examining the need to provide different classroom instruction to better meet diverse learning needs for decades. Baker (2005) contends that

such accommodations must extend beyond the academic realm and into the behavioral realm if students with emotional behavior disorders are to be provided an equal educational opportunity. The existing literature suggests that since there is no one panacea for addressing problem behavior in all its variability, effective school-wide (classroom) approaches must consist of a broad range of strategies and sustained attention to multiple systems of intervention (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 1999; Walker, et al., 1996). Walker & Shea (1998) acknowledged that it is valuable to have a wide repertoire of options when dealing with a wide variety of student needs, because no single intervention is effective with all children or in all circumstances.

Baker (2005) ascertained that teachers who are trained to use different strategies, both instructional and disciplinary, may be more ready to educate a variety of learners. When teachers stress social skills in the classroom and create a climate of cooperation and respect for others, there are fewer discipline problems and less negative behavior (McArthur, 2002). McCloud (2005) contends that when they feel honored and safe, students stop misbehaving, and when students stop misbehaving, teachers have more time to focus on teaching.

Discipline with Dignity

The grades assigned to our public schools through public opinion polls remain as high as ever (Rose & Gallup, 2005). Today the expectation of society is that all students will benefit from schooling and achieve academic success (Gable, Hester, Hendrickson, & Sze, 2005). Federal legislation, most notably, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, put tremendous pressure on school personnel to raise student achievement (Gable, et al.,

2005). Tidwell, Flannery, and Lewis-Palmer (2003) suggested that there is an ever-increasing demand by the public to increase students' academic achievement.

School discipline continues to be one of the greatest challenges in education as both educators and the public at large continue to identify problem behavior as one of the most persistent problems schools face (Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, Gately, Bell, & Muscott, 2004). Discipline is a source of anxiety and uncertainty for many teachers. The lack of discipline leads to teachers' stress, burnout, and inability to care about students (Almeida, 1995; Chelmynski, 1996; Schottle & Peltier, 1991). The number of students with aggressive, acting out, and/or antisocial behavior is steadily increasing and contributing to unsafe and reactive learning and teaching environments (Tidwell, et al., 2003). Tidwell, et al. (2003) contended that students who experience academic difficulties are at risk for displaying behavior problems at school and leaving school before graduation.

Mendler and Curwin (1999) identified five basic principles that provide the foundation for the discipline strategies included in their discipline program, Discipline with Dignity. Those principles are: we are responsible for teaching all students; view difficult behaviors as opportunities to educate for change; the more we motivate, the less we discipline; discipline is just another form of instruction; and have numerous strategies and lots of heart for success (Mendler & Curwin, 1999). The goal of discipline should be to prevent inappropriate behaviors. Mendler and Curwin (1999) compiled seven goals that any effective discipline strategy of prevention should be based upon. According to Mendler and Curwin (1999) teachers should: create caring classrooms; teach self-control; promote concern for others; establish clearly defined limits; emphasize responsibility

rather than obedience; teach conflict-resolution skills; and combine and network with others.

In 1999, fifty percent of pre-service teachers at Southwestern Oklahoma State University reported that they were not prepared for student discipline issues (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Lewis (1999) warned that teachers frequently reported experiences of discipline related stress when attempting to manage student behavior. Just as instruction must be differentiated for the vast array of students, so must the strategies for handling problem behaviors be differentiated (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005). Curwin and Mendler (1997) described the students in today's classrooms as having increasingly varied needs not only academically but also behaviorally and socially. It is a valuable tool for teachers to have a wide repertoire of options when dealing with a wide variety of student needs because no single intervention is effective with all students or in all circumstances (Walker & Shea, 1998). Teachers must be trained to use different strategies, both instructional and disciplinary, to be prepared to educate a variety of learners (Desiderio & Mullennix, 2005).

One such strategy is described by Mendler and Curwin (1999) as the two minute intervention. Mendler and Curwin (1999) proposed that using a two minute intervention in which you identify one challenging student and give two uninterrupted minutes of your time for 10 consecutive days will result in a positive relationship. Raymond Wlodkowski and Judith Jarnes (1990) offer the following suggestions to improve the effectiveness of this strategy: share time with the student for 10 days; find a topic of interest to the student; gradually move from teacher talk to student talk; be naturally complimentary; and be prepared for initial rejection. As with most methods of caring that can facilitate

changed behavior, this method takes time, but must be done consistently (Mendler & Curwin, 1999).

Classes today are full of hurt, discouraged children who need genuine affirmation of their worth (Mendler, 1992). Mendler (1992) cautioned that "working with these children requires an endless supply of caring, concern, patience, enthusiasm, encouragement, sensitivity, and wisdom" (Mendler, 1992, p. 181). Mendler (1992) formulated a list of seven sound principles and guidelines to apply to existing strategies or develop new ones. These guidelines are close in relation to the principles compiled by Mendler and Curwin (1999). Mendler (1992) proposed that teachers should: seek long-term behavior changes versus short-term quick fixes; stop doing ineffective things; seek to be fair and not always treat everyone the same; insure that their rules make sense; model the behaviors they expect; understand that responsibility is more important than obedience; and they must always treat students with dignity. Mendler (1992) clarified that competent teachers seek the reasons or causes of maladaptive behaviors in order to formulate strategies that are effective in changing these behaviors. If discipline systems are based on these guidelines, it makes it possible to uncover the myriad of causes for misbehavior and these causes can be addressed (Mendler, 1992).

Mendler (1992) strongly contended that the most important of the seven principles is to always treat students with dignity. If teachers treat students in undignified manners, students learn to hate school and learning (Mendler, 1993). Mendler (1993) further held that it is easier to treat "good" kids with dignity. It is more difficult to treat students that push our buttons with dignity because it is our natural reaction to react from the gut in these times when it is most important that we react with dignity (Mendler,

1993). Simply being aware of how expectations to correct behaviors are communicated can lead to treating a student with dignity. The communication should be done in private, making eye contact with the student, and in close physical proximity (Mendler, 1993). Methods of discipline such as detention, loss of privileges, or a call home, have a place in discipline plans, but are rarely effective in changing behaviors (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). These strategies are obedience-based models of discipline (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). The interventions recommended by Curwin and Mendler (1997) are more difficult and time-consuming than obedience models, but they teach self-discipline, which, over time leads to easier lives for both the teacher and the student.

Mendler and Curwin (1999) argued that throwing children away does not lead to a positive change in the children; however, when we bring them close to us we initiate a positive change in them. An example of how a teacher may essentially throw a child away is when the teacher is a strong advocate for the removal of the child from the classroom as opposed to try different strategies to reach the child. We must make them part of our group because when they are not, there is no incentive for them to follow our rules (Mendler and Curwin, 1999).

Mendler and Curwin (1999) asserted that to the extent that teachers invest themselves in building relationships with the students in their classes, they invest themselves in building a willingness on the part of the students to cooperate with directives and with classroom rules. He extended the notion that to the extent that teachers withhold or fail in their attempts to exchange caring and respect with their students, they will have to use other measures of discipline management to produce rule following (Mendler, 1999). This will most likely result in a stressful year for the teacher.

Mendler (1992) contends that one way to establish a foundation for effective relationship building is to change how we label students and how they label themselves. This is to reframe or relabel their behavior. When we label disruptive students as students who are without the skills to express their angry feelings, we will treat them differently than if we label them as disrespectful (Mendler, 1992). By reframing what we interpret as lazy, uncaring or unmotivated to frustrated, hurt or being tired of failing, we can stay in the role of teacher rather than behaving like the police (Mendler, 1992).

In response to teachers not differentiating their classroom management, many administrators are spending an extraordinary amount of time addressing issues related to student discipline. Not only have administrators, faculty, staff, and parents expressed frustration with ever-increasing disciplinary matters, but they also report concern that both teaching and learning have been negatively affected as a result (George, Harrower, & Knoster, 2003).

The learning process is shaped by teacher-student relationships and the unique ways both participants influence each other (Gable, et al., 2005). This influence is based on their respective backgrounds and experiences. This view personalizes the process of education and makes clear the responsibilities of both participants, while removing the prejudicial view of the teacher as the one to bring about change (Gable, et al., 2005). Gable, et al. (2005) contends that a quality teacher-student relationship can exert strong influence on student academic performance and classroom conduct.

Mabie (2003) describes a safe school as a place where the business of education is conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear. This setting provides an educational climate that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for

every child (Mabie, 2003). It is a place free of bullying, where behavior expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and fairly applied (Mabie, 2003).

Professional Development and Change

Dufour and Eaker (1998) acknowledged that "schools have demonstrated time and again that it is much easier to initiate change than to sustain it to fruition" (p. 105). A continuous improvement plan is needed to sustain change to fruition (United States Department of Education, 1996; Zmunda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). This type of professional development contains rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers (USDE, 1996). Effective professional development requires and fosters the norm of continuous improvement (Tulsa Public Schools, 2000). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001) notes that staff development that improves the learning of all students will prepare educators to apply research to decision making. The NSDC furthered noted that effective staff development will prepare educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement (NSDC, 2001).

Many teachers are resistant to change and therefore are resistant to professional development activities (Fullan, 1991, Richards, 2002). Fullan (1991) warns that change is highly personal and that each teacher affected by the change must be allowed to work through the change in a way that allows for equal reward and cost to the teacher. Richards (2002) found that teachers are resistant to change for several reasons. Among those reasons are; skepticism, increased burdens on the teacher, lack of ownership, fear of loss of control, lack of support, and lack of perceived benefits (Richards, 2002). Isolation

of teachers creates one of the most formidable roadblocks to change and professional development (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Richards (2002) suggested that in order for professional development and reform to be effective, it must come from within the school and be implemented by teachers in the school. One explanation to the old saying, the more things change the more they remain the same is the fact that those who advocate and develop change usually experience more rewards than cost and those who implement change usually experience more cost than reward (Fullan, 1991).

Murphy (2002) concluded that it has been the common practice for professional development to be planned by the principal and to have intentions of achieving dramatic improvements in classroom teaching and student performance. Professional development has traditionally been short-term, disjointed, and held outside of the school day, in physical locations and contexts that are far removed from the classroom (Murphy, 2002; USDE, 1996). Rivero (2006) refers to this type of professional development as "one size fits all courses" and warns that these parameters for professional development are no longer effective. Dufour and Eaker (1998) pointed out that schools must embrace ideas about professional development and professional learning communities that are radically different from those ideas that have guided schools in the past.

Professional development must be guided by a common goal and data must be used to set and achieve this goal (Zmunda, et al. 2004). Elder (2005) asserted that data should be reviewed to identify the gap between the ideal and the real. Zmunda, et al. (2004) further noted that innovations must be identified that will most likely close the gap between the ideal and the real. Once the data has been reviewed and innovations identified professional development can serve as the bridge between where prospective

and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding all students to higher standards of learning and development (USDE, 1996).

The process or "how" of professional development is as critical to improvement as the content and context (TPS, 2000). The United States Department of Education (1996) has identified 10 standards for best practices in professional development. The characteristics of promising professional development programs as identified by the United States Department of Education are:

1. Focus on teacher as central to student learning; yet include all other members of the school.
2. Focus on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement.
3. Respect and nurture the intellectual and leadership capacities of teachers, principals, and others in the school community.
4. Reflect the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.
5. Enable teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards.
6. Promote continuous inquiry and improvement in daily life of schools.
7. Planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development.
8. Require substantial time and other resources.
9. They are driven by a coherent and long-term plan.

10. They are evaluated ultimately on the basis of their impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning, and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts. (United States Department of Education, 1996)

Zmunda, et al. (2004) acknowledged that continuous improvement is reliant not on a fixed concept of success but on a consistent striving to do better. Zmunda, et al. (2004) further acknowledged that the individual must realize that their competence is directly and indivisibly linked to the competence of the school.

The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships

The Alexander City School System used the Discipline with Dignity discipline model as the basis for the professional development activities provided for teachers with the objective of improving classroom management within the school system. The first of the seven goals described by Mendler and Curwin (1999) as being instrumental in any effective discipline program of prevention is to create a caring classroom. Teachers can show that they care through the formulation of positive teacher-student relationships. Mendler and Curwin (1999) proposed the use of the two minute intervention to establish such relationships.

Behavior problems and class disruptions steal precious instructional time from educators and students. Often feeling pressured to cover the material so that scores will rise, many teachers are eager for the technique to use so that disruptions to education will end (Mendler, 1992). Mendler (1992) concluded there is no such technique. Tomal (2001) found that while there have been a variety of models used by teachers to manage classroom discipline such as Discipline Without Coercion, Discipline With Dignity,

Discipline Through Self-Control, Assertive Discipline, and Discipline by Negotiations, teachers continue to search for effective methods to manage student behavior. The existing literature suggests that since there is no one panacea for addressing problem behavior in all its variability, effective school-wide approaches must consist of a broad range of strategies and sustained attention to multiple systems of intervention (Muscott, et. al., 2004).

Tidwell, et al. (2003) argued that studies show that the use of clearly defined rules and expectations and teacher reinforcement of behavioral expectations can decrease inappropriate behaviors and increase academic achievement. Rules alone will not stop misbehavior unless they are integrated within a positive and warm classroom atmosphere (Geiger, 2000). Geiger (2000) proposed that teachers who care and respect their students create an environment that maximizes learning. Most teachers recognize that a close and understanding teacher-student relationship can have a powerful ameliorative effect on students most at-risk for school-related problems (Gable, et al. 2005). Much of the literature contends that one defining characteristic of quality schooling relates to teacher-student interactions (Gable, et al. 2005).

Much of the literature in support of and in refute of discipline programs agree that students need to feel connected to the school and teachers and share a positive relationship with the adults in the school (Brown, 2005; Deiro, 2003; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Gable, et. al., 2005; Geiger, 2000; Handley, 2002; Payne, 1996). Mendler and Curwin (1999) further showed that difficult youth who succeed are surrounded by supportive adults and peers who find ways of communicating that the person, and who he or she is, is more important than any misbehavior.

Jones (1996) identified five main features of the comprehensive nature of classroom management. The second item on his list is creating positive teacher-student relationships (Jones, 1996). Research indicates that as early as preschool, the quality of teacher-student relationships influence children's social and cognitive development (Davis, Schutz, & Chambliss, 2001). Davis, et al. (2001) acknowledged that relationships with teachers continue to be important throughout adolescence by influencing students' social-emotional adjustment, patterns of achievement, motivation, and academic success.

Marzano (2003b) proposed that there are four aspects of classroom management: 1. classroom rules and procedures; 2. disciplinary interventions; 3. teacher-student relationships; and 4. mental set. One might make the case that teacher-student relationships are the keystones for the other factors (Marzano, 2003b). When a good relationship exists between student and teacher, students more readily accept and follow rules and procedures. He further indicated that without the foundation of a good relationship, students commonly resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions. Curwin and Mendler (1997) formulated, within Discipline with Dignity, ten practical disciplinary guidelines. Over one-third of these guidelines dealt with building a positive teacher-student relationship (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). Joyce, Wolf, and Calhoun (1993) concluded that caring relationships define the essence of success in teaching. Teacher-student relationships are found to promote learning and academic growth within students (Deiro, 2003). Marzano (2003b) concluded that the purpose and guidance provided by the teacher should be both academic and behavioral.

Relationships characterized by a sense of closeness to the teacher may permit students to be open to taking risks in the classroom, developing new academic interests,

and appreciation of the value of what is being learned as well as the process of learning (Davis, et al. 2001). These all lead to greater student achievement. Strahan, Cope, Hundley and Faircloth (2005) concluded that the most successful teachers orchestrated classroom management by creating positive relationships with their students. Brown (2005) felt that these teachers create caring relationships with students by using genuine empathetic responses to their concerns.

Jones (1987) asserted that establishing a relationship is by far the most effective and efficient form of behavioral management. When teachers and students build positive relationships, the teacher places themselves in the position to influence the behavior of the student (Jones, 1987). Deiro (2003) indicated that relationships formed for the purpose of affecting change in one party are called influential relationships. These are the types of relationships that need to be built between teachers and students. When two people share a positive relationship, pleasing the other person serves as a reward in its own right (Jones, 1987).

Getting to know students at the beginning of the year can be an invaluable tool for teachers in establishing positive teacher-student relationships (Babkie, 2006; Byrnes, 2005; Ferko, 2005). Babkie (2006) found that knowing as much as possible about them (students) helps the school year begin smoothly for teachers, students, and parents. Master teachers share some common practices that lead to positive teacher-student relationships. These teachers begin by really getting to know their students, setting up a one-to-one relationship with each student as soon as possible, establishing trust, and trying to figure out what motivates each student (Reider, 2005). These actions help to

create a connectedness between the student and teacher. Handley (2002) asserted that much of a teacher's instructional success is wrapped in that personal connection.

A line of research that provides a useful perspective on the nature of an effective teacher-student relationship is one that addresses the needs of different types of students (Marzano, 2003b). Many teachers do not build relationships with those students that need them the most, students from different cultures and socio-economic statuses than their own, especially students from poverty. Payne (1996) ascertained that the key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships with them. Payne (1996) further asserts that the most significant motivator for students from poverty is relationships. Brophy (1996) found that effective teachers do not treat all students the same, particularly in situations involving behavior problems. Payne (1996) submitted that when students who have been in poverty (and have successfully made it into the middle class) are asked how they made the journey, the answer nine times out of ten has to do with a relationship – a teacher, counselor, or coach who made a suggestion or took an interest in them as individuals.

When teachers seek to create one-to-one positive relationships with all students in their classes, a caring class community evolves. The five c's of classroom management according to Almeida (1995) are: clarity, consequences, consistency, caring, and change. Almeida (1995) listed caring as one of his five c's in classroom management. Teachers need to care more about their students as the focal point of the classroom, and less about the curriculum (Almeida, 1995). Almeida (1995) argued that the curriculum is important, but if students sense you are more concerned about finishing a lesson than you are about them, they will be less likely to behave the way you would like them to. Every student

should feel comfortable and capable and should consider themselves contributing members of the class (Babkie, 2006). A caring class environment creates school connection. Blum (2005) proposed that school connection leads students to believe that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. The key to a caring class community is the teacher's attitude and intent. When teachers model caring behavior for their students, they will inevitably create a caring environment (Levine, 2006).

Along with the creation of positive teacher-student relationships much of the literature emphasizes that respect of the student is essential to effective classroom management. Teachers cannot assume that students will automatically act in an acceptable manner just because that is what adults expect (McArthur, 2002). Respect given leads to respect gained (Babkie, 2006). Babkie (2006) ascertained that one way to analyze your level of respect is to consider how you wish to be treated and use that as a guideline in working with your students.

The mutual respect that is a by-product of a positive relationship readily translates for the student into a respect for the opinions, rules, and values of the adult (Jones, 1987). Respect is perhaps the most important of all the principles of Discipline with Dignity, without dignity students learn to hate school and learning (Curwin & Mendler, 1995). Jones (1987) agreed that when an adult is in the role of teacher to a student, a willingness by the student to please the teacher produces both cooperation and mutual appreciation. To honor students as human beings worthy of respect and care is to establish a relationship that will provide for enhanced learning (Payne, 1996).

Successful classroom management builds responsibility in the student. Discipline is less about punishment and more about teaching responsibility (Mendler, 1999). When students are taught responsibility they become problem solvers instead of problem producers (McCloud, 2005). Pastor (2002) further added that discipline is not primarily keeping things under control by making choices for students; it is a matter of helping students learn to make good choices and be responsible for those choices.

There are numerous discipline styles utilized by teachers and preferred by students. Yoon and Gilchrist (2003) found that teachers prefer administrators that had direct involvement in the discipline process. Chiu and Tulley (1997) found that students prefer a discipline style wherein teachers consider it their role to interact continually with the student to arrive at solutions to behavior problems. This type of discipline depends heavily on relationship building. Marzano (2003b) also added that it is the right combination of moderate to high dominance and moderate to high cooperation that provides the optimal teacher-student relationship for learning.

While many programs exist to help teachers in minimizing class disruptions and maximizing instruction, there is no one program that addresses all of the problems. One common characteristic in the literature is that a positive teacher-student relationship is vital to any discipline program (Almeida, 1995; Babkie, 2005; Byrnes, 2005; Deiro, 2003; Handley, 2002; Jones, 1987; Levine, 2006; Mendler, 1992; Mendler & Curwin, 1999; Payne, 1996; Reider, 2005).

Levine (2006) held that unless students feel connected to the school experience and the people he or she encounters there, learning will be compromised as emotional survival becomes the primary focus during the school day. Levine (2006) also suggested

that the key is a teacher's attitude and intent, the modeling of caring behavior for students inevitably creates a caring environment. Almeida (1995) adds that teachers need to care more about their students as the focal point of the classroom, the curriculum is important, but if students sense you care more about finishing a lesson than you care about them, they will be less likely to behave the way you would like them to. Teachers need to strive to ensure that students feel comfortable and capable and that they consider themselves contributing members of the classroom (Babkie, 2006).

Curwin and Mendler (1997) indicated respect for the student as the foundation for their discipline program, Discipline with Dignity, and for dealing with difficult youth. McArthur (2002) proposed that teachers can not assume that students will automatically act in an acceptable manner just because that is what adults expect. When teachers stress social skills in the classroom and create a climate of cooperation and respect for others, there are fewer discipline problems and less negative behavior (McArthur, 2002). Babkie (2006) contends that respect given by teachers will lead to respect gained from students.

Payne (1996) extended the notion by defining a successful relationship as one in which emotional deposits are made to the student, emotional withdrawals are avoided, and students are respected. Jones (1986) contended it takes time to build a positive relationship with a student. During this time caring and respect are exchanged (Jones, 1986). Jones (1986) further ascertains that from this giving and receiving of caring, helping, concern, and respect, a bond is built between teacher and student that can be trusted. This bond is the basis for cooperation and spontaneous helping. Jones (1986) suggested that when adults build a positive relationship with a young person, they place themselves in a position to influence the behavior of that young person. Jones (1986)

further contends that the mutual respect that is a by-product of a positive relationship readily translates for the young person into a respect for the opinions, rules, and values of the adult. Relationships are by far the most effective and efficient form of behavioral management.

Discipline Approaches

Chiu and Tulley (1997) conducted a study to determine the discipline approach most preferred by students. They looked at three different categories of approaches: the confronting-contracting approach which is grounded in social and developmental psychological theories; the relationship-listening approach which is grounded in humanistic and psychoanalytic thinking; and the rule/reward-punishment approach which is grounded in experimental behaviorist psychologies. Chiu and Tulley (1997) found that students preferred the confronting-contracting approach. This approach assumes that interrelationships between individuals and their environment are the keys to understanding behavior, and considers it the role of the teacher to interact continually so that they can together arrive at solutions to behavior problems (Chiu & Tulley, 1997). This approach emphasizes teacher-student interactions, the basis for teacher-student relationships.

Marzano (2003b) concluded that teacher-student relationships are critical to the success of two of the other aspects of effective classroom management – rules and procedures, and disciplinary interventions. In a study involving 68 high school students, 84 percent said that disciplinary problems that occurred could have been avoided by better teacher-student relationships (Sheets, 1994). Sheets (1994) argued that the causes

of many classroom behaviors labeled and punished as rule infractions are in fact problems of students and teachers relating to each other interpersonally.

Tomal (2001) found that when teachers manage disciplinary problems in the classroom they tend to develop a dominant discipline style. In his study of teacher discipline styles, Tomal (2001) classified teachers as using one of five discipline styles; enforcing, abdicating, supporting, compromising, and negotiating. Tomal (2001) concluded that teachers appear to engage in a form of negotiation with students. Geiger (2000) found that teachers usually adopted disciplinary methods that did not disrupt the flow of instruction. Yoon and Gilchrist (2003) found that elementary teachers saw the principal's direct involvement in disciplining students as the most desired administrative support when dealing with aggressive and disruptive students.

The review of relevant literature found many different approaches to literature. This review of literature addressed three studies that identified the most preferred components of these numerous approaches (Chiu & Tulley, 1997; Marzano, 2003b) and the most preferred styles of literature (Tomal, 2001; Yoon & Gilchrist, 2003). These approaches were too numerous to discuss each one in this publication.

Reframing/Respect

A positive teacher-student relationship offers the teacher motivation to seek ways to change the perception of difficult students from feeling hopeless to believing in themselves (Curwin, 1995). Moorefield (2005) cautioned that children are often disruptive because they are hungry, tired, unhappy, sad, or angry at a previous situation and they act out because they crave attention, feel left out or are bored. Classroom disruptions rarely relate to the issue at hand or are personal attacks on the teacher

(Curwin, 1995; Moorefield, 2005). Moorefield (2005) warned that in-the-moment emotions distort true issues that arise with children.

Babkie (2006) concluded that it is more beneficial for a teacher to evaluate the function of inappropriate and unacceptable behavior to determine how the behavior benefits the student. Gartrell (1995) warns against confusing misbehavior with mistaken behavior. Misbehavior implies that the student has intentionally done something wrong and must be punished, while mistaken behavior implies that a mistake has been made in the process of learning (Geiger, 2000).

Positive teacher-student relationships lay the ground work for teachers to evaluate the function of misbehavior or inappropriate behavior. Curwin and Mendler (1997) believed that because student misbehavior can push teachers' buttons, teachers must find ways to stay personal with the student without taking the misbehavior personally. Curwin and Mendler (1997) warned that when emotions are stronger than reason, teachers will defend themselves rather than do what is best for the student. When student behavior makes a teacher want to fight back, the teacher faces the difficult challenge of finding ways of preserving the teacher-student relationship (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). One of the techniques demonstrated by Curwin (1995) is the art of reframing.Reframing is changing the label we give to a student or the student's behavior (Curwin, 1995). Curwin (1995) pointed out that this allows the teacher to preserve the teacher-student relationship. An example of the benefits of reframing is offered by Curwin (1995): When a teacher reframes or labels a student's disrespect as that student not knowing how to be angry; the teacher helps the student maintain dignity, the teacher maintains dignity, the

teacher models appropriate behavior for the class, the student's attitude is affected, and the student learns a better way to handle anger (Curwin, 1995).

Reframing can lead to positive explanations of behavior, along with suggested interventions (Payne, 1996). Curwin and Menler (1997) acknowledged that consequences should be provided for misbehavior, but it should be a consequence that teaches the student appropriate behavior. The goal of discipline should be to teach rather reinforce the student's belief that adults are mean and hurtful (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). Reframing does not condone misbehavior, rather it is an effective way to change behavior and keep the teacher-student relationship intact.

Geiger (2000) pointed out that traditionally teachers react to misbehavior by shaming, verbally reprimanding, threatening, embarrassing, paddling, and suspending or expelling the misbehaving student. Yost and Mosca (2002) proposed that many times when a student acts out, the teacher takes the behavior personally and reacts on impulse, often reinforcing the behavior. Curwin and Mendler (1997) felt that in most schools and classrooms, what we call discipline gives children the message that they will be punished for not doing what they are told. On the other hand, if they follow the rules they are responsible and gain access to classroom rewards and privileges. Students not following the rules are seen as defiant and face time-out, detention, loss of privileges, a phone call home, or a zero on assigned homework (Curwin & Mendler, 1997). Curwin and Mendler (1997) ascertained that while these methods may have a place within an overall discipline plan, they are rarely effective in changing behavior.

Serious misbehaviors cannot be ignored. Henley (1997) asserted that when used judiciously, punishment clarifies limits and establishes consequences for specific

behaviors. What punishment doesn't do is teach new behaviors, which is the goal of discipline (Curwin & Mendler, 1999; Henley, 1997). If used frequently or harshly, punishment only hardens a student's resistance to change (Henley, 1997). Curwin (1995) found that the student becomes satiated on punishment. More punishment is needed to get the same effect.

Punishments work immediately with no long-term results, forcing the student to respond with the desire to escape, counterattack, or respond with stubborn apathy (Henley, 1997). Henley (1997) found that punishment forces compliance, rather than encouraging students to take responsibility for their own behavior. Henley (1997) proposed that routine use of punishment saps the teacher-student relationship, turning partners in learning into adversaries. Obenchain and Taylor (2005) cautioned that the main change teachers need to make is to avoid being reactive when dealing with student behavior.

Discipline Systems

George, Harrower, and Knoster (2003) wrote that the need to address student problem behavior in both general and special education setting in today's schools is complex. In any school one would expect to find three relatively distinct populations of students (Sprague, Walker, Golly, White, Myers, & Shannon, 2001). These populations typically include developing students; those at risk for behavioral and academic problems, and high-risk students who already manifest serious behavioral and academic difficulties (Sprague, et al., 2001). Many teachers and administrators are looking for a process to develop and apply a cohesive model of behavior supports to address this range of behaviors (George, et al., 2003). Tidwell, et al., (2003) suggested that discipline

systems in most schools are designed to react rather than prevent problem behaviors. Reactive use of aversive consequences remains the standard and ineffective approach to management of student behavior in traditional schools across the country (Baer, 1998). Tidwell, et. al., (2003) stated that research has shown that reactive discipline systems are ineffective and result in increases in problem behavior, rather than improvements in behavior. Tidwell, et. al., (2003) goes on to say there is growing recognition for schools to adopt a variety of practices to create and maintain safe, proactive learning environments through the establishment and delivery of a curriculum that addresses the academic and behavioral needs of all students and creates an organizational system that enables educators to implement in an accurate and sustainable manner for all students.

Pastor (2002) pointed out that discipline is not primarily keeping things under control by making choices for students; it is a matter of helping students learn to make good choices and be responsible for those choices. Strahn, et. al., (2005) concluded that caring relationships define the essence of teaching. The most successful teachers orchestrated classroom management by creating positive relationships with their students (Strahn, et. al., 2005). McArthur, (2002) found that when teachers stress social skills in the classroom and create a climate of cooperation and respect for others, there are fewer discipline problems and less negative behaviors.

Pastor (2002) formulated respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, fairness, and citizenship as the necessary principles for any effective discipline model. Creating caring schools and classrooms and teaching students how to behave responsibly are the foundations of the Discipline with Dignity discipline program (Curwin, 1995). Curwin (1995) promotes the establishment of teacher-student relationships, mutual respect, and

the maintenance of dignity as the necessary components for effective classroom management. McCloud (2005) felt the culture of a school could be changed from rowdy to calm, from irresponsible to responsible, from uncooperative to cooperative, and from disrespectful to respectful by teaching and allowing students to become problem solvers instead of problem producers. The teaching of consideration of others reduces classroom discipline problems, increases the time available for classroom instruction, and creates a positive learning environment (McArthur, 2002). McCloud (2005) contended that when students feel honored and safe, students stop misbehaving, and when students stop misbehaving, teachers have more time to focus on teaching.

Student Achievement

The mainstay of traditional discipline systems has been suspensions. Mendez and Knopf (2003) argued that regardless of the rationale underlying it, repeated suspension has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes for students, including academic failure, negative school attitudes, grade retention, and school drop-out. When a school-wide program for prevention and early intervention is in place, research and experience indicate that schools can expect to see decreases in the number of behavior incidents as well as positive changes related to academic achievement and overall school climate (George, et. al., 2003).

If teachers are to adequately address behavior that impedes the teaching/learning process, they must have the skills and supports to respond to a rapidly changing school age population (Gable, et al., 2005). Baer (1998) stated that administrators and classroom teachers must seek ways to successfully address the overlapping challenges of discipline

and instruction. Gable, et al., (2005) sought to bring attention to the role teacher-student relationships play in shaping the culture of the classroom. Emphasizing the importance of looking carefully at student behavior within a social and instructional context; including teacher-student relationships (Gable, et al., 2005). Comer (1995) noted that no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.

Hilliard (1997) ascertained that education is not about sophisticated pedagogy, it's all about relationships. Relationships are critical to the development of a positive school climate (Rea & Stallworth-Clark, 2003). Rea and Bergin (2002) cautioned that relationships are at the core of what we do with children. Trump and Moore (2000) suggested that students who feel they are a valued part of the school are much more willing to protect the school environment than students who feel they are anonymous.

Schools too often treat students as if they were an enemy that must be controlled and contained (Rea & Stallworth-Clark, 2003). Emihovich (1983) suggested teachers will assume the responsibility of students that do well but are unwilling to accept responsibility when a child misbehaves. Only recently have researchers begun to examine teacher-student relationships in the terms of the construction of social norms within different context.

Students have a need to feel that teachers are involved with them and that the adults in the school know and care about them (Klem & Connell, 2004). Trump and Moore (2000) pointed out that nothing is more important to a child than being known. Rea and Stallworth-Clark (2003) stated that in building relationships children need to be viewed as citizens rather than tourists. Schools struggle in their efforts to create an environment where all children have the opportunity to be a part of a culture that focuses

on the needs of children, one that is built on a foundation of communication, respect, and relationships (Rea & Stallworth-Clark, 2003). Klem and Connell (2004) observed that students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment are more engaged in the learning process. Klem and Connell (2004) further showed that if the environment is one in which expectations are high, clear, and fair the students are more apt to perceive themselves as being engaged in the learning process.

Protheroe (2007) acknowledged that in schools and classrooms where student-student and student-teacher relationships are especially warm and positive, there is clear evidence of the high value placed on students as individuals. The literature further supports this idea by noting the importance of making sure that every student feels known and valued by at least one adult in the school (Klem & Connell, 2004; Protheroe, 2007; Trump & Moore, 2000). Klem and Connell (2004) noted that when students feel positive, caring, supportive relationships with their teachers they become more engaged in the learning process.

All stakeholders in the school want students to experience school as a safe and comfortable environment (Protheroe, 2007). Protheroe (2007) questioned whether in this heightened state of accountability and academic standards, should special attention be devoted to the establishment of schools that are safe and comfortable? The literature supports an answer of yes (Klem & Connell, 2004; Marzano, 2003a, Protheroe, 2007; Trump & Moore, 2000;). Teacher-student relationships provide a sense of trust, confidence and psychological safety that allows students to focus on learning (Lee, Smith, Perry & Smylie, 1999). Lee et al. (1999) described students involved in strong, positive teacher-student relationships as being free to take risks, admit errors, ask for

help, and experience failure along the way to higher levels of learning. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a theoretical basis for connecting students' feelings of emotional security and their ability to focus on learning (Protheroe, 2007). Students who have their needs for safety, belonging, and self-esteem met, possess an important foundation for building knowledge (Boldt, Witzel, Russell & Jones, 2007; and Protheroe, 2007).

Protheroe (2007) pointed out that there are many things that schools can do to create a caring community and demonstrate caring. Most of these strategies are common sense, take little extra time, and are already a part of the day-to-day activities (Protheroe, 2007). Rea and Stallworth-Clark (2003) noted the importance of supportive teacher-student relationships and smaller learning communities in establishing a healthy school climate. Teachers that engage in positive relationships with their students help students build confidence and a sense of self that make academic success seem attainable (Lee, et al. 1999). Positive relationships with students can be fostered through teachers being visible in the school, at after school and evening programs, and in the community (Rea & Bergin, 2002). Significant gains can be made in the fostering of relationships if teachers make an effort to get to know their students (Yancy, 2005). Protheroe (2007) compiled a list of strategies that can be instrumental in fostering positive teacher-student relationships and creating a caring school climate. Among the suggestions were to ensure student safety, model caring and respect for all members of the school community, build structures and routines that help build community, and convey high expectations for student behavior as well as academic achievement. Every staff member must take

responsibility to ensure that no child falls through the cracks (Marzano, 2003a; Protheroe, 2007).

Social support for academic learning refers to the personal relationships that students have with people who may help them do well in school (Lee, et al. 1999). When schools raise their expectations of students and their standards for academic success, they must consider the social supports students need to succeed and the relationships that must be fostered (Protheroe, 2007). For students to take advantage of high expectations and advanced curricula, they need support from the people with whom they interact in school (Klem & Connell, 2004; Lee, et al. 1999). Protheroe (2007) suggested that for students who receive little support from elsewhere, it is important they receive personal support for learning from principals and teachers. This support can come in the form of teachers providing individual care, attention, and help to students (Lee, et al. 1999).

Trump and Moore (2000) cautioned that in creating a climate of caring where relationships thrive, connecting with students is an important ingredient. When schools seek to improve the learning of students, a sense of connection between teachers and students is an often overlooked or missing link (Rea & Stallworth-Clark, 2003). Rea and Bergin (2002) have shown that building relationships contributes to personalization within a school. Students take ownership of the school and their learning when they are allowed to develop positive relationships with adults within the school (Rea & Bergin, 2002). Research has found that school efforts to connect with students can have effects far beyond the school year in which they are instituted (Protheroe, 2007).

One of the components of positive discipline is the provision of feedback to students (Boldt, Witzel, Russell, & Jones, 2007). It is strongly believed that this feedback

should be given through an empathetic and caring relationship with an adult faculty member (Boldt, et al. 2007). The provision of this feedback should be regular and consistent (Boldt, et al. 2007). To avoid control by the adult, the heart of this feedback process should be student-centered relationships (Boldt, et al. 2007).

Klem and Connell (2004) cited research linking higher levels of engagement in school with improved academic performance. Engagement is the student's interest and emotional involvement with school, this includes their motivation to learn (Klem & Connell, 2004). Klem and Connell (2004) defined engagement in the behavioral context as time spent on work, intensity of concentration and effort, tendency to stay on task, and propensity to initiate action when given the opportunity.

While students highly engaged in school are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, and have lower drop-out rates, students with low levels of engagement are at-risk for a variety of long-term adverse consequences, including disruptive behavior in class, absenteeism, and drop-out (Klem & Connell, 2004). Klem and Connell (2004) found that teacher support is important to student engagement in school. Students that are supported by teachers experience high levels of engagement academically (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Providing students with emotional support helps the students focus on learning (Protheroe, 2007). Klem and Connell (2004) found that student engagement is a robust predictor of student achievement and behavior in schools, regardless of socioeconomic status. Students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school report more positive academic attitudes and values and more satisfaction with school (Klem & Connell, 2004). Rea and Stallworth-Clark (2003) concluded that a desire to achieve

academically is often driven more by the teacher-student relationship than by a fundamental interest in the class subject. McEvoy and Werner (2000) further concluded that low performance schools demonstrated significant improvement in academic performance and social norms when relationship issues were addressed. Relationships create motivation for students to achieve (Lee, et al., 1999). Lee et al. (1999) contended that relationships build confidence and a sense of self that make academic success seem attainable.

A strong relationship with a caring adult enables at-risk youth to make life-altering changes (Werner & Smith, 1992). Protheroe (2007) surmised that an emphasis on providing an emotionally safe environment can have a particularly powerful impact on students who may be academically at-risk. Protheroe (2007) identified providing emotional support for students most at-risk of failure as a key strategy in addressing the achievement gap and raising overall student performance. Students who move from school to school due to circumstances associated with poverty are placed at-risk for academic and behavior problems and possess a need to be a contributing member of a supportive community (Protheroe, 2007). Protheroe (2007) indicated membership in a supportive community as a prerequisite to being able to concentrate on learning. For students experiencing difficulty in their personal and academic life a supportive relationship can provide the emotional support needed to focus on learning (Protheroe, 2007).

Lee, et al. (1999) found that the relationships that students develop in and around school, with teachers, peers, and other adults, take on increasing importance as children reach adolescence. The importance of relationships rests on an argument that students

who experience more positive relationships at school will learn more as a result (Lee et al., 1999). Yancy (2005) argued that one of the factors instrumental in the teaching of African-American students is building relationships. Klem and Connell (2004) further argued that students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school report more positive academic attitudes and values and more satisfaction with schools.

Marzano (2003b) identified the quality of teacher-student relationships as the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management. The presence of positive relationships ensure that discipline is fair and that established methods of dealing with conflict and disruptions are utilized (Rea & Stallworth-Clark, 2003). Trump and Moore (2000) implied that knowing students enables the principal and teachers to identify students who are at-risk for disciplinary problems or for dangerous behavior.

School Climate

School climate is a term for the intangible that can affect learning; as such, it deserves serious attention in the discussion effort to improve academic performance (Tableman, 2004). School climate has been researched for many years and continues to be examined and redefined as a result of its significant influences on educational outcomes (Marshall, n.d.). Whether a school climate is positive or negative will determine whether it yields positive or negative educational outcomes (Marshall, n.d.). A negative climate can prevent optimal learning and development (Freiberg, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996; Kuperminc, et al. 1997; Kuperminc, et al. 2001; Manning & Saddlemire, 1996).

Tableman (2004) found that school climate characterizes the organization at the school building and classroom level. He further referred to school climate as the "feel" of

the school and warned that it can vary from school to school within the same district. School climate reflects the physical and psychological aspects of the school that are more susceptible to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place (Tableman, 2004). Tableman (2004) further defined school climate as the way students and staff feel about being at school each day.

Tableman (2004) added that a positive school climate is an orderly environment in which the school family feels valued and able to pursue the school's mission free from concerns about disruptions and safety. A safe school is one in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors to interact in a positive, non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth (Bucher & Manning, 2005). A positive school climate exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust (Bucher & Manning, 2003; Marzano, 2003a; & Tableman, 2004). School climate is the belief system or culture that underlies the day-to-day operations of the school (Bucher & Manning, 2003; & Tableman, 2004).

Many factors influence school climate. Kuperminc et al. (2001) pointed to the number and quality of relationships between adults and students as a factor that influences school climate. Johnson, Johnson, and Zimmerman (1996) identified students' and teachers' perceptions of their school environment, or the school's personality as influencing school climate. Johnson and Johnson (1993) further showed academic performance as an influential factor in school climate. Freiberg (1998) cited feelings of safety and school size as impacting school climate. Manning and Saddlemire (1996)

concluded that feelings of trust and respect for students and teachers influenced school climate. Marshall (n.d.) added that environmental factors such as the physical building and classrooms, and the materials used for instruction impact school climate. Tableman (2004) described caring and safety as the most influential factors on school climate. Many factors comprise the complex concept of school climate which plays a significant role in providing a healthy and positive atmosphere (Marshall, n.d.).

Assessments of school climate consider multiple factors and individuals within the school system and provide further detail into the nature of school climate (Marshall, n.d.). Dupper and Meyer-Adams (2002) noted that an assessment of school climate should result in characteristics of warmth, tolerance, positive responses to diversity, sensitivity to other's views, cooperative interactions among students, teachers, and school staff, and an environment that expects and reinforces appropriate behavior. Haynes, Emmons, and Comer (1993) identified teacher-student relationships as one of the key factors for consideration in the assessment of school climate.

Improving student behavior and academic performance generally requires changing school climate (Tableman, 2004). Tableman (2004) cited nineteen studies as having found that a better school climate is associated with; higher grades, engagement, attendance, expectations and aspirations, a sense of scholastic competence, fewer school suspensions, and on-time progression through grades. Studies documented that students in schools with a better school climate have higher achievement and better socioeconomic health (Tableman, 2004). School climate is a significant element in the discussions concerning improved academic performance and school reform.

McEvoy (2000) suggested that positive interpersonal relationships and optimal learning opportunities for students in all demographic environments can increase achievement levels and reduce maladaptive behavior. Freiberg noted, "the interaction of various school and classroom climate factors can create a fabric of support that enables all members of the school community to teach and learn at optimal levels" (1998, p. 22). Manning and Saddlemire (1996) agreed, "trust, respect, mutual obligation, and concern for others' welfare can have powerful effects on educators and learners' interpersonal relationships as well as learners' academic achievement and overall school progress" (1996, p. 41). Marshall (n.d.) proposed that a positive school climate can provide an enriching environment, both for personal growth and academic success. Safe schools are supportive schools and all things being equal, safe and supportive schools are likely to be high performing and address the needs of all students (Furlong, Paige, & Osher, 2003). Rea and Bergin (2002) argued that student performance is impacted positively or negatively depending on the climate of the school. With increased attention to student and staff accountability in education, there is a tendency to minimize the role school climate plays in student performance or success (Rea & Bergin, 2002). Rea and Bergin (2002) further pointed out that children do not excel or achieve where they don't want to be or don't feel wanted.

School climate is a significant element in discussions of potential solutions to problems such as bullying, inter-student conflicts, suicide, character education, and moral education (Tableman, 2004). A positive school climate has been associated with fewer behavioral and emotional problems for students (Kuperminc et al., 1997). Some researchers have found that positive school climate perceptions are protective factors for

boys and many supply high risk students with a supportive learning environment yielding healthy development, as well as preventing antisocial behaviors (Haynes, 1998; Kuperminc, et al. 1997;). Bucher and Manning (2003) found that in a school with a positive school climate behavioral situations are viewed as problems to be resolved rather than actions to be punished, and disruptive students are asked and encouraged to help resolve problems. Rea and Bergin (2002) asserted that students' behavior is influenced by family, community and school and the degree to which positive experiences are fostered in each of these environments influences the students' attitudes and behaviors.

Marshall (n.d.) stated whether a school climate is positive or negative will determine whether it yields positive or negative educational and psychological outcomes. A negative climate can prevent optimal learning and development and a positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school; students, staff, parents, and the community (Freiberg, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Kuperminc et al., 1997; Kuperminc et al., 2001; Manning & Saddlemire, 1996).

Bucher and Manning (2003) held that efforts to make schools safe should include collaborative relationships among all stakeholders. Rubin (2004) acknowledged that students need many opportunities to get to know and feel connected to adults and other students. Staff members are expected to model caring, understanding, and cooperation (Rubin, 2004).

Improved school climate is a goal to pursue and educators should constantly work toward improving their school climate so that student learning is improved (Bucher & Manning, 2005; Marzano, 2003a; & Rubin, 2004). Tableman (2004) warned that a single school can develop a climate independently of the larger organization and changes in the

school climate at the district level can positively or negatively affect school climate at the building level. A change in school climate may require moving the school along a continuum from "at risk" to "safe" to "thriving", which is a process that takes time to accomplish (Tableman, 2004). Among the factors that lead to an improved school climate are the provision of a safe environment for staff and students, and teachers and principals treating students fairly, equally, and with respect (Harris & Lowry, 2002). Bucher and Manning (2003) found that efforts to make schools safe should include collaborative relationships among all stakeholders.

School climate always has room for improvement and improved school climate is always being worked on by professional educators (Rea & Bergin, 2002). To not work on school climate is a step backward. All stakeholders must contribute to the change process of improving school climate (Rea & Bergin, 2002). School climate often takes a backseat to student and staff accountability with the role of school in student performance minimized (Rea & Bergin, 2002).

While educators use all types of technology in efforts to make schools safe, true safety only comes from positive human relations and a climate of trust (Kohn, 2004; Mabie, 2003;). Freiberg and Stein (1999) held that since school climate is the heart and soul of a school, it can either foster resilience or become a risk factor. Marzano (2003a) argued that although he listed "a safe and orderly environment" as the fourth school-level factor that affects student achievement, its importance is evident. Without a minimum level of safety and order, a school has little chance of positively affecting student achievement (Marzano, 2003a).

Summary

In this age of accountability, instructional time is treasured by both teachers and students. When teachers have to deal with disruptive behavior it steals instructional time from teachers and students. The first part of this chapter gave background information on the research problem. The need for professional development activities to introduce teachers to strategies, to build strong, positive teacher-student relationships was the objective of the southeastern rural school system. This section relates the need for change and the most effective way to achieve change through professional development. In order for change to be take place all stakeholders must embrace the need for change and contribute to the change effort. A critical mass of teachers must endorse the change.

This is followed by discussion and description of Discipline with Dignity. It reviews the principles and guidelines introduced by Curwin and Mendler in their discipline system. This system is based on respecting the student and getting to know the student and the causes of their misbehavior. Discipline with Dignity is grounded in the belief that through relationships teachers get to know their students and the causes of their misbehavior. This gives the student a reason to want to behave for the teacher. The teacher always allows the student to maintain their dignity while the teacher maintains his/her dignity.

The importance of teacher-student relationships in discipline systems, both at the building and classroom level are reviewed. Jones (1987) stated that relationships are the most inexpensive and efficient forms of classroom management available to teachers. Students must feel connected to and wanted by the adults in the classroom. Students will not learn where they feel that they are not wanted or welcomed.

The author then discusses different approaches to discipline. Students tend to favor discipline approaches that are grounded in the interrelationships between individuals and their environment. Marzano (2003b) viewed the teacher-student relationship as the key to success in classroom management systems that use rules and procedures and disciplinary interventions to be effective. The strategy of reframing is discussed as a means of understanding student misbehavior. When a teacher reframes a student's behavior everyone involved is able to maintain their dignity and the teacher makes an effort to understand the misbehavior.

A discussion of discipline systems follows. Many schools are spending an inordinate amount of time on controlling discipline and finding the one discipline system that works. The literature makes it clear that there is no one quick fix to all of the discipline problems that schools face. Teachers and administrators must differentiate discipline just as instruction is differentiated. The discipline procedures adopted should aim toward preventing behavior instead of simply reacting to behavior.

The last area of focus is on the relationship between discipline and student achievement. Teachers must possess skills that enable them to respond to the rapidly changing population of the school. The behaviors that impede teaching and learning must be addressed. This can only be done if teachers and administrators have the skills necessary to address the behaviors of these diverse populations. The chapter then focuses on relationships, the key to understanding the diverse populations. As argued by Hilliard (1997) effective education is all about relationships. Teacher-student relationships are instrumental in influencing students to follow rules and become motivated to achieve academically. The quality of the relationships present between teachers and students is

the keystone for classroom instruction. Positive teacher-student relationships help students to become more engaged in school leading to improved student achievement.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of school climate and its role in student achievement. The quality of school climate is indicative of student engagement and achievement in the school. Positive teacher-student relationships are reflected in a positive school climate. Schools must always strive to improve school climate. School climate can be the catalyst for students to achieve academic success or the catalyst for putting students at risk for failure. Addressing and improving the quality of teacher-student relationships is one means of fostering a positive school climate. A positive school climate gives the school a greater chance of positively affecting student behavior, which in turn will positively affect student achievement.

III. METHODS

"*The question for the child is not 'Do I want to be good?' but 'Whom do I want to be like?'*"

Bruno Bettelheim

Introduction

This study considers the importance of the role of professional development in effective discipline programs and classroom management strategies, the role of teacher-student relationships in effective discipline programs and classroom management, and how both of these effect the perceptions of teachers concerning school climate. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the professional development activities provided for teachers and the perceived teacher-student relationships present after teachers participated in these activities and how they affect school climate. The research design chosen was one of a mixed-method evaluative approach. This mixed-method evaluative approach was used to measure the effects of professional development activities on teacher-student relationships and school climate in the schools within the Alexander City School System. When this design is used, often the quantitative methodology is used to measure the outcomes, and the qualitative methodology is used to describe the implementation of a program (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004).

This chapter will outline in detail the research methodology used in this study. The research questions that were the basis for this study design will be stated. This will be followed by a detailed description of the setting in which the study took place and a description of all participants. Finally, the research instrument development will be discussed, along with data collection procedures and data analysis.

This study was framed around the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Professional Development activities to improve classroom managent and teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?
3. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom mangement affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?
4. To what extent has professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

Description of the Setting

The Alexander City Public School System is located in East Central Alabama. This area of Alabama is located approximately 60 miles Northeast of Montgomery and 25 miles west of Auburn. The Alexander City School System is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as a system as a whole and not by individual schools. It is also accredited by the Alabama State Department of Education. There are five schools within the Alexander City School System. According to the 2005-

2006 Alabama State Department of Education Average Daily Membership, the district provides educational services for 3,467 students. These students are divided among the five schools by grade level. One school serves students in grades Kindergarten through 2nd grade, one school serves students in grades 3rd through 4th, another school serves grades 5th and 6th, the middle school serves grades 7th and 8th, while the high school serves grades 9th through 12th (Alabama State Department of Education, 2005).

The five schools in the district are Jim Pearson, Nathaniel Stephens, William L. Radney, Alexander City Middle School and Benjamin Russell High School. Each of these schools have participated in system wide professional development activities to develop a system wide discipline plan. The administrators in the system have labored to create a seamless transition from one school to the next with regards to rules, procedures, and discipline. This is important to the students in the system because increased order in the school leads to increased student achievement (Marzano, 2003a).

Participants

The participants in this study were the teachers of the five schools of the Alexander City School System. These teachers have participated in Discipline with Dignity professional development activities for the past two years. These activities were provided during the initial teacher institute each year, along with follow-up sessions throughout the year. According to the Local Education Agency Personnel System Report for the 2005-2006 school year, there were 241 teachers in the district. The teaching experience of the teachers ranged from zero to over 30 years of service.

The Researcher's Role

During the period of research the researcher was employed by the Alexander City School System as an Assistant Principal. The role of the researcher was to examine the perceptions of the teachers of the Alexander City School System toward the Discipline with Dignity professional development activities they took part in. The researcher was one of the presenters during the Discipline with Dignity presentations, providing much of the follow-up professional development. As an Assistant Principal the researcher worked directly with a sample of the population dealing with discipline issues. The researcher was afforded the opportunity to analyze data collected from the teachers of the school system to determine if any definite perceptions were held by the teachers toward the professional development activities and their effect on student-teacher relationships and school climate. In so doing, the instruments were distributed with no connection being made to the researcher. This was important because the data was used to evaluate and enhance current professional development activities.

The researcher has worked with teachers, in the context of Assistant Principal, to develop an effective system wide discipline plan that will increase the orderliness of the school climate which in turn will increase student achievement. The researcher is aware that internal bias could impact the true analysis of the study. The researcher understood the importance of not adding any inferences into the results of the study to protect the validity of the study. Prior comments and discussions regarding the effectiveness of professional development and the lack of a valid discipline program were not allowed to enter into the analysis of the study. Only the comments that were recorded on the open

ended questions of the study survey were considered. Everyday conversations and observations were disregarded by the researcher with respect to the study.

Instrument Development

Description of the Instrument

The researcher designed a survey to collect the perceptions of the teachers toward professional development and its' effects on teacher-student relationships and school climate. The instrument designed was the *Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate.* The instrument assessed the perceptions of teachers toward professional development, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. The three part questionnaire was designed to collect data regarding professional development, teacher-student relationships, school climate, background information of the respondents, and trends on the strategies used for classroom management. Permission to collect data was granted through the Office of Instructional Research at Auburn University (see Appendix D).

Section I of the survey was designed to collect demographic information that led to a greater understanding of the sample population. The statements in Sections II on the survey were framed around the research questions and the common themes that were derived from the review of literature. The items on the survey relate back to the current literature. These items were used to examine the perceptions of the teachers toward professional development activities, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. The items were grouped according to the content/constructs that emerged during the review of literature. Messick (1994), contends that by using this design, all important parts of the construct domain are covered. In further support of this design, he offers that

this type of structural approach allows for the specification of the boundaries of the construct domain to be assessed such as determining the knowledge, skill, attitudes, motives, and other attributes to be revealed by the instrument (Messick, 1994). Adding support to this belief, Brennan (1998) believed that it is essential for the instrument developer to consider this approach or design because of the importance of the content-related evidence and/or literature. Messick (1994) presented this as a key issue for the content aspect of construct validity. If the developer of the instrument cannot defend the content of the instrument based on how the items are structured, little else matters (Brennan, 1998) (See Appendix A for Instrument).

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section I collected demographic information such as gender, grade level taught, and years of experience teaching. This section was designed to collect information that would help the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the respondents and the trends that emerged from the study.

Section II of the study consisted of 29 Likert-type questions. These questions were answered using a four-point Likert-type scale. The range of the scores on the Likert-type scale was based on an ordinal scale. The ordinal scale consisted of the following: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree. Section II was divided into three sections. These sections were designed according to the constructs that emerged during the review of related literature. The three constructs were: professional development, teacher-student relationships, and school climate.

The professional development section contained items that were based on the construct definition offered by the United States Department of Education (1996). They

state that professional development is rigorous and relevant content strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers and others whose competence, expectations and actions influence the teaching and learning environment (United States Department of Education, 1996). The items in this section of the questionnaire contained information on the professional development provided to teachers in the Alexander City School System and how well it followed best practices of professional development. There were 8 items in this section.

The teacher-student relationship section contained items framed around the construct definition offered by Deiro (2003). Deiro (2003) defined teacher-student relationships as those relationships formed to promote learning and academic growth in students. There were 12 items in the section of the questionnaire. The items collected information on the presence of teacher-student relationships and the willingness of teachers to establish these relationships.

The last section collected information on school climate. These items were supported by the construct definition given by Deal and Kennedy (1983). They contend that school climate is a reflection of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the members of the school. They further add that school climate is the collective personality of a school based upon an atmosphere distinguished by the social and professional interactions of the individuals in the school (Deal & Kennedy, 1983). This section was designed to collect information on the school climate, including respect for each other and the atmosphere of the school. This section contained 9 items.

The final section of the questionnaire contained 3 open-ended items. These items were designed to collect information that was used to describe the implementation of

knowledge gained from the professional development activities. The 3 items addressed the strategies that were used by teachers after the professional development, any behaviors that were stopped or started as a result of the professional development activities, and the benefits teachers gained from the professional development activities. These items were also used to evaluate the opinions of the respondents.

Content Related Validity and Reliability Evidence

The questionnaire was given to a panel of experts to gain support for the validity of the content. The core panel of experts consisted of five Assistant Principals from the Alexander City School System, five teachers from the Alexander City School System, one Director of Student Services from the Alexander City School System, and two Directors of Curriculum and Instruction (one from the Alexander City School System and one from the Elmore County School System). The panel of experts was asked to review the items on the questionnaire and make suggestions and/or recommendations. They were strongly reminded that they were reviewing the items and not just proofreading the instrument. This panel was given a list of objectives for the questionnaire and asked to determine if the items met the objectives of the construct domain. Eggers and Jones (1998) defined experts as individuals who possess sufficient knowledge and experience and have mastered advanced skills in a particular field of study (Eggers & Jones, 1998). The panel of experts consisted of individuals that have all worked in education in excess of 10 years and have demonstrated great success with classroom management and relationships with students. Expert professional judgment and feedback related to the design of the instrument serves as substantial documentation that addresses the content aspect of construct validity (Messick, 1994). In addition to the review of the items by the

panel of experts, the fact that the items were framed around the current literature lends to the content validity. The researcher reviewed the feedback from the panel of experts who made no recommendations for changes to the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument was challenged by using a field test. The questionnaire was field-tested with a group of 15 teachers. The field-test group consisted from 3 teachers from each of the schools in the Alexander City School System. These teachers had all demonstrated excellent written communication skills. They were chosen because Fowler (1993) holds that when a researcher develops her own instrument, to accomplish the task of ensuring that scores from his instrument is reliable, the researcher's goal should be to have respondents first understand then answer each item of the instrument in the best way possible. These teachers had demonstrated their ability to determine the clarity and readability of the items. This field test was conducted during the month of March 2007. The teachers were also asked to complete the survey and provide feedback and suggestions about the design of the instrument and the items.

The field test of the instrument's reliability yielded the following suggestions and comments:

- Good format. Seems a little long. I remember the Discipline with Dignity inservice at ACMS, and I really enjoyed it! Lots of good information. I think a continuation should be offered every year. I feel that new teachers can learn a lot and us old people get a "fresh" reminder of the obstacles in our students' lives. I like the pre-post survey. Real time consuming – but the questions are appropriate.

- This seems to address professional development but not the population that is greatly represented with discipline referrals, isn't that the main question?
- Shouldn't the study address professional development of teachers concerning student relationships?
- I think the question should precede with "most teachers" not just teachers which implies 100% of teachers.
- I do think I would add one question to the last page – something to the effect of "How have the Discipline with Dignity activities helped you?" Something to make teachers think about what they personally gained from this professional development series. They may express things the survey doesn't cover.

Reliability

An instrument must be reliable to be trusted. Reliability is the ability of an instrument to be consistent in producing the same measure each time it is used (Fowler, 1993). Fowler (1993) contends that if scores from a measure are not reliable, the measure will not agree with itself. Cronbach's alpha is a test that is regularly used to demonstrate the internal consistency of a survey instrument (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). Ary, Jacobs, and Razivieh, (2002) asserted that Cronbach's alpha is most often used by researchers when they use Likert-type scales to collect data. Santos (1999) used Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of two different Likert-type scales. Alpha coefficients range in value from 0 to 1, the higher the score, the more reliable the scores from the scale are. Santos (1999) noted 0.7 as an acceptable reliability coefficient. Internal consistency reliability was shown in the survey based on the measures for the

various scales. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the full instrument and calculated for each scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged in value from .83 to .92 for each scale. Table 1 contains the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each scale.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha for Each Scale

	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Professional Development Pre-Test	.784
Professional Development Post-Test	.830
Teacher-Student Relationship Pre-Test	.815
Teacher-Student Relationship Post-Test	.830
School Climate Pre-Test	.865
School Climate Post-Test	.864

Data Collection Procedures

Three of the schools in the Alexander City School System are categorized as elementary schools, one school is categorized as a middle school with the last school being categorized as a high school. At the elementary level teachers are grouped as grade level teams. At the middle and high school levels teachers are departmentalized by subject matter taught. During the course of each month both grade level teams and departmental teams meet. The researcher requested that the team and departmental leaders distribute the questionnaire during their last monthly meeting in May. These meetings fell within a two week window. The researcher asked the team or department leader to distribute the questionnaire to the members present giving instructions for the

instrument to be completed on their own. The respondents were to then return the questionnaire to the team or department head's mailbox. The team or department head was provided with envelopes with which to return the surveys to the researcher. Using this procedure not only does the researcher gather information more expeditiously and cost effectively, but also the respondents are motivated to complete the questionnaire and return it (Dillman, 2000). He also noted that this approach proves to be less expensive for the researcher and respondents can take their time completing the questionnaire, providing for more thoughtful answers (Dillman, 2000).

Once each respondent had completed their questionnaire they placed it in the envelope provided by the researcher, sealed it, and returned it to the team or department head's mailbox. Once the team or department head had collected all or most of the questionnaires they notified the researcher that they were ready to be collected. The researcher collected the questionnaires from each school. No list was compiled of which respondents returned or did not return the survey. The respondents were asked not to put their name or any other identifiable information on the questionnaires in order that the data would remain anonymous.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data. The items in section two of the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations. This was done using the computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0. This computer program allowed the researcher the capability to determine the perceptions that teachers held toward professional

development, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. The data collected in section three of the questionnaire was analyzed using qualitative methods to identify any themes that emerged from the answers to the open-ended questions. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) assert that when you identify emerging themes from the answers to open-ended questions, there is the potential to produce more insightful, even dialectically transformed, understandings of the phenomenon such as program implementation and outcomes (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004, p. 318).

Summary

The researcher designed a questionnaire based on the current review of literature. This questionnaire was designed to collect data that would help in determining the perceptions held by the teachers in the Alexander City School System toward professional development activities they participated in and their effects on teacher-student relationships and school climate. After the instrument was designed it was administered to a panel of experts in the field to determine content validity. The questionnaire was then field-tested by 15 teachers from the Alexander City School System to test its reliability. After validity and reliability were established through the panel of experts and the field test, the questionnaire was administered to the teachers in the Alexander City School System. Once the administration was completed the instruments were anonymously collected by the researcher.

Chapter IV of this study will present the data collected in this study. The data will be presented and interpreted using quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The quantitative findings will be presented first, followed by the qualitative findings. The

results will be used within the Alexander City School System to evaluate the current professional development practices, teacher-student relationships and school climate. The data will help administrators determine whether to revise or modify current practices or to abandon them altogether.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

"The secret in education lies in respecting the student."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction

In this age of accountability it is important to understand the factors that lead to improved student achievement. The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of the role of professional development in effecting the fostering of teacher-student relationships and how both of these affect the perceptions of teachers concerning school climate. The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between the professional development activities provided for teachers and the perceived teacher-student relationships present after teachers participated in these professional development activities.

This study was framed around four research questions: (1) What is the relationship between professional development activities and teacher-student relationships; (2) To what extent have continuous professional development activities impacted teacher perceptions of school climate; (3) To what extent have continuous professional development activities affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships; (4) To what extent have professional development

activities affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers. The need for the study lies in determining whether the return on investment from professional development regarding classroom management and school climate can yield results in the improvement of teacher-student relationships and student achievement.

The analysis of the data collected for the study regarding teachers' perceptions of the affects of professional development on teacher-student relationships and school climate will be presented in the next three sections. The first section describes the response rate and the demographics of the respondents. This includes gender, grade level taught, and years of experience. The second section will describe the results yielded from the three subsections of the instrument: Professional Development, Teacher-Student Relationships, and School Climate. The data for this section were collected using twenty-seven Likert-type questions. The respondents scored the items using a four point rating scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree. The data were analyzed using the computer software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0. The third section will consist of a description of the respondents' responses to the three open-ended items in section three of the instrument. The data from the open-ended items were examined to identify any common themes that were present. The themes will be presented in section three. The chapter will end with a brief summary.

Results of Educational Demographics

Surveys were distributed to the two hundred thirty certified teachers of the five schools

within the public school system during the fall of 2007. Ninety-eight of those surveyed returned the instrument. This was a response rate of .43 (43%). The response rate is deemed acceptable.

Gender of Respondents

The data found that all ninety-eight of the respondents answered the item regarding their gender. Fifteen of the respondents were male (15%) and eighty-three of the respondents were female (85%).

Grade Level Taught

The data in Table 2 represents the responses to item two regarding the grade level taught by the respondents. The grade levels taught range from elementary, middle, and high school. All ninety-eight of the respondents answered the item regarding the grade level taught. Of the ninety-eight respondents fifty-six or 57% taught elementary, eighteen or 18% taught middle school, and twenty-four or 24% taught high school. The largest group of respondents taught elementary school.

Years Experience

Table 3 shows the years of experience of the ninety-seven respondents that answered item three of the demographics section. Item three asks the respondents to indicate the years of experience they have in education. The results indicated that four to ten years of experience was the most often reported with 28 teachers reporting four to ten years experience (29%), 20 with eleven to fifteen years experience (21%), sixteen with sixteen to twenty years experience (16%), and ten with zero to three years experience (10%).

Table 2

Grade Level Taught by Participants

Grade Level Taught	*n*	*Percent of Participants*
Elementary School	56	57
Middle School	18	18
High School	24	24
Total	98	99

Table 3

Years Experience in Education

Years Experience	*n*	*Percent of Participants*
0 – 3 years	10	10
4 – 10	28	29
11 - 15	20	21
16 – 20	16	16
20+	23	24
Total	23	24

Results of Quantitative Data

Section two of the instrument consisted of twenty-seven Likert-type items. These items focused on the teachers' perceptions of the three subsections of the instrument (Professional Development, Teacher-Student Relationships, and School Climate). The respondents were asked to rate each statement with regards to their beliefs as to how the statement related to the theme of each section. The Likert-type scale items were scored with a four point scale. The possible responses were 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree, and 4-strongly agree. The results of each subsection will be discussed.

Professional Development

The first subsection, "Professional Development", consisted of items one through eight. These items were grouped together and rated together. These items assessed the teacher's perception of both the quality and effectiveness of professional development opportunities provided for them by the school district. The instrument assessed teachers' perceptions before participating in the activities and perceptions after they had participated in the activities. The data for this section of the instrument are presented in tables three and four. The overall mean score for the pre-subtest items is 2.82 with a minimum score of 2.22 and a maximum score of 3.19. In the pre-subtest the respondents were most agreeable with item one regarding professional development providing strategies and ideas that are helpful with classroom management. The mean score for this item was 3.19 with a standard deviation of .51. The respondents were least agreeable with item eight regarding the quality of pre-service training they received in classroom management. The mean score for item eight was 2.23 with a standard deviation of .88.

The same item received the least agreeable responses in the post-subtest. The mean for item eight in the post-subtest was 2.45 with a standard deviation of .84.

Table 4

Pre-Test and Post-Test Professional Development

Pre			*Professional Development*	*Post*		
N	*Mean*	*SD*	*Item Number*	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
91	3.19	.51	1. Professional development activities provide ideas and strategies that are helpful with classroom management.	95	3.18	.58
91	3.07	.61	2. Professional development provided adequately addresses the need for strong teacher-student relationships.	95	3.24	.56
91	3.01	.62	3. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have been ongoing.	95	3.12	.71
91	2.75	.66	4. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have been relevant to the needs of the teachers.	95	2.93	.67
91	2.80	.64	5. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have provided for adequate practice of the strategies and ideas introduced.	95	2.89	.68
91	2.59	.60	6. Teachers have been provided with adequate follow-up to the professional development activities.	95	2.69	.74
91	2.92	.58	7. Teachers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the professional development activities.	95	2.96	.58
91	2.23	.88	8. My pre-service (college courses) provided me adequate training to effectively manage my classroom.	95	2.45	.84

Teacher-Student Relationships

The major focus of the professional development provided to teachers by the school district was the importance of teacher-student relationships and their role in classroom management. Items nine through 18 addressed the perceptions of teachers toward the level of relationships between teachers and students and the extent that teachers perform to enhance such relationships both before participating in the professional development and after participating in the professional development. The data in Tables five and six represent the results of items nine through 18. The overall mean score for the pre-subtest was 2.89 with a minimum score of 2.17 and a maximum score of 3.43. Respondents responded most favorably to item fourteen which stated teachers within the school want all students to achieve. The mean score for this item was 3.43 with a standard deviation of .64. All items within the pre-subtest were within one standard deviation of the mean. The overall mean score for the post-subtest was 2.95 with a minimum score of 2.09 and a maximum score of 3.51. Respondents were most agreeable with item fourteen; teachers want all students to achieve. The mean score for this item was 3.51 with a standard deviation of .62. All items in the post test were within one standard deviation of the mean. In the Teacher-Student Relationships subtest the respondents were least agreeable with item twelve. This item addressed whether teachers viewed misbehaviors as directed toward them personally. The mean score was 2.17 with a standard deviation of .59. The respondents were least agreeable with the same item, item twelve, in the post-subtest. The mean score in the post-subtest was 2.09 with a standard deviation of .64.

Table 5

Pre-Test and Post-Test Teacher-Student Relationships

Pre			*Teacher-Student Relationships*	*Post*		
N	*Mean*	*SD*	*Item Number*	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
90	3.17	.46	9. Teachers in this school make efforts to form relationships with their students.	93	3.23	.49
90	2.76	.72	10. Teachers in this school show respect for all of their students.	93	2.81	.74
90	2.80	.74	11. Teachers in this school look at the causes of student misbehavior.	93	2.87	.71
90	2.17	.59	12. Teachers in this school view misbehaviors as directed toward them personally.	93	2.09	.64
90	2.64	.62	13. Teachers in this school view discipline as a strategy to teach students alternate behaviors.	93	2.78	.64
90	3.43	.64	14. Teachers in this school want all students to achieve.	93	3.51	.62
90	3.32	.61	15. Teachers in this school take extra measures to help students achieve.	93	3.40	.66
90	2.99	.73	16. Teachers in this school take extra measures to understand and meet the needs of students beyond academic needs.	93	3.12	.73
90	2.70	.79	17. Teachers in this school treat all students fairly.	93	2.72	.80
90	2.92	.60	18. Teachers in this school listen to students.	93	3.00	.61

School Climate

The subtest on school climate included items nineteen through twenty-seven. The data in tables seven and eight represents the results of the pre and post-subtests measuring teacher perceptions of the effects of professional development activities on school climate. An orderly school in which students feel safe is imperative in fostering the maximum achievement in students. The overall mean score for the pre-subtest on school

climate was 2.87 with a minimum score of 2.60 and a maximum score of 3.27. Item 27 yielded the most favorable result with a mean score of 3.27 and a standard deviation of .62. Item twenty-seven measures the perception of the teacher regarding whether the school is a safe place for faculty, staff, and students. All items in the pre-subtest were within one standard deviation of the mean. The items in the post-subtest had a mean score of 2.91 with a minimum score of 2.60 and a maximum score of 3.29. Respondents were again most agreeable with item twenty-seven, that the school is a safe place for faculty, staff, and students. Item twenty-seven had a mean score of 3.29 with a standard deviation of .66. All items in the post-subtest were within one standard deviation of the mean. In both the pre and post-subtests the respondents were least agreeable with item twenty-two regarding students' respect for school property. The mean score for item twenty-two on the pre-subtest was 2.60 with a standard deviation of .67. On the post-subtest the mean score for item twenty-two was 2.61 with a standard deviation of .67.

Effect Size

A paired samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether teachers perceived professional development as having an effect on teacher-student relationships and school climate. The results indicated that the mean perception before professional development (M=2.92, SD=.79) was not significantly greater than the perception after the professional development (M=2.86, SD=.66. The standardized effect size index, d, was .54, a moderate value. The mean difference between the Likert-scale ratings for teacher-student relationships and school climate was .06.

Qualitative Data Findings

Three open-ended items were included to collect some qualitative data. These items collected data to determine if professional development activities provided strategies that teachers could use in the classroom, if teachers had stopped or started using any strategies due to the professional development activities, and if the professional development activities had helped teachers to build teacher-student relationships. The specific questions that were asked in these items were:

1. In your opinion, what were the best strategies introduced during Discipline with Dignity. Please list.
2. Have you started/stopped writing discipline referrals for any behaviors that you did/did not write discipline referrals for before participating in Discipline with Dignity professional development activities? If yes, please list these behaviors and tell if you started or stopped writing discipline referrals for these behaviors.

Table 6

Pre-Test and Post-Test School Climate

Pre			*School Climate*	*Post*		
N	*Mean*	*SD*	*Item Number*	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
88	3.20	.48	19. This school is a supportive and inviting place for students.	96	3.27	.55
88	2.61	.61	20. Students at this school show respect for their peers.	96	3.59	.59
88	2.68	.65	21. Students at this school show respect for the faculty and staff.	96	2.74	.60
88	2.60	.67	22. Students at this school show respect for school property.	96	2.61	.67
88	2.61	.63	23. Students at this school show respect for the rules and procedures of the school.	96	2.68	.59

88	3.00	.82	24. This school clearly communicates the consequences for breaking school rules.	96	2.99	.79
88	2.90	.81	25. The administrators at this school handle discipline problems fairly.	96	2.94	.81
88	3.02	.71	26. The administrators at this school are supportive of teachers in the discipline strategies they choose to use.	96	3.03	.75
88	3.27	.62	27. This school is a safe place for faculty, staff, and students.	96	3.29	.66

3. Have the Discipline with Dignity professional development activities been beneficial to you in the formation of teacher-student relationships? If yes, please explain.

The items were analyzed by the coding of the responses and identifying the themes that emerged (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). The themes that emerged supported the finding that the participants became more aware of the importance of teacher-student relationships. The three themes that emerged addressed the affect that the professional development activities had on the respondents' attitude toward teacher-student relationships. The themes consisted of the following affects on the attitudes of teachers: no change in attitude but new strategies were employed, a positive change in attitude, and a reinforcement of the present attitude. The following comments support the themes that emerged. For each theme, comments were chosen that reflect a wide range of responses rather than the norm. Responses that fit neither theme were excluded.

Theme 1 – No Affect on Attitude

The qualitative data revealed that some respondents felt that there was no change to their attitude toward teacher-student relationships or the strategies they employed in managing their classroom. A number of respondents did identify other strategies that emerged during the professional development activities that aided them in classroom management. The following comments support theme 1:

> ' Listening to students without prior judgement.'
>
> 'Attempt to understand the child, circumstances, and environment. Don't disagree or embarrass the student.'
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'I usually do not write any referrals – that's not to say I had perfect classroom behavior. Some behavior changes come with maturity.'
>
> 'It's stayed about the same. I rarely write them.'
>
> 'I haven't really changed a great deal because I already used many of the strategies and very rarely write a discipline referral. Most of my understanding came through prior situations that were difficult. The strategies given were probably most helpful for beginning teachers. Perhaps they could utilize what they learned and avoid the mistakes I made early in my career.'
>
> 'To me the program came across as another way to take accountability out of the students' lives. It seemed to want us to become enablers of destructive behvaviors.'

Theme 2 – Positive Affect on Attitude

Many of the respondents revealed that the professional development activities helped them to recognize the importance of teacher-student relationships. They made efforts to establish teacher-student relationships. These relationships provided an additional strategy to manage the classroom. The following comments were made on the survey:

'I write fewer referrals now because "respect" is primary in my classroom. The students are aware that they are to respect themselves, other peers, and their elders. I do the same by modeling. It is the self-fulfilling prophecy.'

'Getting to know your students – developing relationships.'

'Respect your students, get to know them – mentor students, remain calm and in control of the situation.'

'Building a positive teacher-student relationship – much preventive focus.'

'Giving students opportunities and responding to students in a caring manner was the best strategy I learned during Discipline with Dignity.'

'Emphasis placed on building a relationship with each student in my opinion was the best strategy.'

'Use to create a positive consequence for the student – building student-teachers rapport.'

'Building teacher-student relationships.'

'Getting to know students better to see why they may be acting out.'

Theme 3 – Reinforcement of Present Attitude

The most profound theme that emerged was that the professional development activities served to reinforce the teacher's belief that teacher-student relationships are important to student achievement, school climate, and classroom management. The following comments were made on the survey:

'The professional development serves to help remind and support my basic principles that occasionally may become overwhelmed by a student's negative behavior.'

'The activities supported strategies that I was already using. And the activities also helped me to refine some of my strategies.'

'In some ways – already doing most of these things in the classroom.'

'I have always felt like I had a pretty good relationship with my students, but I am glad to be aware of cultural differences.'

'The activities reinforced many of my current beliefs and policies.'

Summary

The findings of the study were reported in this chapter. The demographics of the sample were reported in the first section of the chapter. This was followed by the quantitative results. The quantitative data was collected using a pre and post-test design constructed using a Likert-type scale. The results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 computer software. Statistically notable data was found for each of the three sets of quantitative items. This was followed by a discussion of the analysis and results of the qualitative data. This data was collected from the responses to three open-ended items. The data were analyzed by coding the responses and reviewing the themes that emerged.

The research revealed that it was the perception of the teachers of the Alexander City School System that professional development activities provided for them had been effectively administered and was based on best practices. The research further revealed that it was the perception of the teachers that the professional development activities in which they participated had been beneficial in positively effecting school climate and teacher-student relationships. The next chapter will present a discussion of the conclusions drawn from these findings and their implications for future research.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them."
Lady Bird Johnson

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 teachers toward the effectiveness of professional development activities to enhance teacher-student relationships and improve school climate. It was the intent of this study to establish an understanding as to how better professional development practices can supply teachers with the tools they need to establish more positive teacher-student relationships and in turn improve school climate. The findings of this study will be the basis for the discussion of implications for K-12 teachers and administrators, higher education administrators, and for future research. The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between professional development activities and the perceived teacher-student relationships present after teachers participated in these activities. This study attempted to achieve this goal by answering the following four research questions:

1. What is the relationship between professional development activities to improve classroom management and teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?

3. To what extent have continuous professional development activities to improve classroom management affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?
4. To what extent have professional development activities to improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

A survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher to measure the perceptions of K-12 teachers regarding the effect of professional development activities on teacher-student relationships and school climate. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. To analyze the qualitative data the researcher identified themes that emerged from the responses to the three open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part was designed to collect demographic data about the respondents. Part II of the questionnaire consisted of the quantitative questions that collected data regarding the teachers' perceptions toward professional development practices, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. Part III of the questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions that were designed to collect data regarding the affect of the professional development activities on teacher practices.

Conclusions

With increased accountability being placed upon school districts with regard to student achievement it is important to know that students need to feel connected to the school and teachers and share a positive relationship with the adults in the school (Brown, 2005; Deiro, 2003; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Gable, et al., 2005; Geiger, 2000;

Handley, 2002; Payne, 1996). Youth that experience academic and behavior problems and overcome these problems to become successful adults are surrounded by supportive adults and peers who find ways of communicating that the person, and who he or she is, is more important that any misbehavior (Mendler and Curwin, 1999).

The conclusions drawn from this study provide points of consideration for the school district when considering whether or not to continue with current professional development activities that focus on teacher-student relationships and improving school climate. The conclusions are:

1. There is a relationship between the professional development activities provided to improve classroom management and teacher student relationships. The data indicates that the K-12 teachers feel that the professional development activities were successful in promoting the importance of positive teacher-student relationships.
2. Teacher-student relationships are perceived to have been positively affected by the professional development activities to improve classroom management that were provided by the district. The data indicates that the K-12 teachers feel that teachers make efforts to form positive teacher-student relationships more after participating in the professional development activities.
3. Professional development activities provided to improve classroom management have been beneficial in improving school climate. The data indicates that the K-12 teachers felt that the schools were safer for faculty, staff, and students after participating in the professional development activities.

4. Teachers feel that the professional development activities to improve classroom management either offered them strategies that were beneficial in helping them manage their classrooms or reinforced the strategies they were already using. Three themes emerged from the data: 1. no effect on strategies employed, 2. offered strategies to be used in classroom management, 3. reinforced strategies already being used.
5. College courses are not providing pre-service teachers with the adequate training they need to effectively manage their classrooms. The data indicates that teachers feel that they were not adequately prepared to handle classroom management.

A brief discussion of each conclusion follows.

Professional Development

Professional development that improves the learning of all students will prepare educators to apply research to decision making (NSDC, 2001). Effective professional development will prepare educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievements (NSDC, 2001). The K-12 teachers in this study agreed that the professional development activities that were provided for them by the district were relevant to their needs, provided for adequate practice and follow-up of strategies and ideas introduced, and provided opportunities for feedback. These are the basis for best practice in professional development (NSDC, 1996). The focus of the professional development activities was the promotion of teacher-student relationships and improved school climate. A majority of the K-12 teachers agreed that the professional development

activities led to the promotion of efforts by teachers to establish teacher-student relationships.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Jones (1996) identified creating positive teacher-student relationships as one of the five main features of the comprehensive nature of classroom management. Relationships with teachers continue to be important throughout adolescence (Davis, et. al., 2001). Marzano (2003b) contends that teacher-student relationships are the keystone of the other three factors of classroom management. The K-12 teachers in the study indicated strong agreement that the teachers in their schools make efforts to form relationships with their students. A majority of the teachers were in agreement that teachers want all students to achieve and they take extra measures to help them succeed, including striving to form positive relationships with them and looking beyond the misbehavior to the cause of the behaviors.

School Climate

Improving student behavior and academic performance generally requires changing school climate (Tableman, 2004). Positive interpersonal relationships and optimal learning opportunities for students in all demographic environments can increase achievement levels and reduce maladaptive behaviors (McEvoy, 2000). If personal growth and academic success for all students is the goal, a positive school climate can provide the enriching environment necessary (Marshall, n.d.). The K-12 teachers indicated that they perceived the school climates to be improved after participating in the professional development activities. After participating in the professional development activities a majority of the teachers were in agreement that students showed respect for

peers, faculty and staff, property, and rules and procedures of the school. They agreed that the schools were safe for all stakeholders.

Classroom Management Strategies

Classroom management must be differentiated just as instruction must be differentiated. The data indicated that a small percentage of the teachers felt that the professional development activities offered them no additional strategies to help differentiate their classroom management. The majority of the K-12 teachers felt that the professional development activities served to remind them that strategies they were currently using were effective and to reinforce their trust in these strategies. Another group of teachers felt that the professional development activities were instrumental in providing strategies that helped to improve their classroom management skills.

Pre-Service Preparation

Discipline problems have led to anxiety and uncertainty, teacher stress, burnout, and the inability of teachers to care about students (Almeida, 1995; Chelmynski, 1996; Schottle & Peltier, 1991). Sixty-one of the 95 respondents (64%) disagreed with the statement that they were adequately prepared to handle classroom management by their college courses. These teachers entered the classroom with a false sense of confidence or no confidence at all with regards to managing student behavior.

Implications

This study was conducted with regards to one specific school district and their focus for professional development. The focus was on teacher-student relationships and improving school climate. The basis for focusing on teacher-student relationships and school climate lies in the belief that teachers that are trained to use different strategies,

both instructional and disciplinary, may be more ready to educate a variety of learners (Baker, 2005). Some implications may be drawn from the findings of this study. The following implications could be considered significant.

Implications For K-12 Teachers

Relationship is by far the most effective and efficient form of behavioral management (Jones, 1987). Getting to know students can be an invaluable tool for teachers in establishing positive teacher-student relationships (Babkie, 2006; Byrnes, 2005; Ferko, 2005). If teachers are to educate the diverse population of students that arrive at school each day they must get to know these students for who they are in order to be able to address their needs as learners. The findings of this study imply that in creating positive student relationships the school climate will improve. A good school climate is conducive to optimal student achievement. Since the school district provides professional development activities that address the enhancement and formulation of teacher-student relationships, the K-12 teachers should approach the professional development activities enthusiastically and embrace the strategies as resources to help students achieve to their greatest potential.

Implications For K-12 Aministrators

A negative climate can prevent optimal learning and development while a positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school; students, staff, parents, and the community (Freiberg, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1997; Kuperminc, et. al., 1997; Kuperminc, et. al., 2001; Manning & Saddlemire, 1996). Improved school climate is a goal to pursue and educators should constantly work toward improving their school climate so that student learning is improved (Bucher & Manning,

2005; Marzano, 2003a; Rubin, 2004). Efforts to make schools safe should include collaborative relationships among all stakeholders (Manning and Bucher, 2003).

With the movement toward increased accountability for student achievement, administrators must examine all factors that affect student achievement. The most basic and fundamental factor is the relationship between the teacher and the student. The data in this study imply that the current professional development practices are positively influencing the school climates of the schools involved. The administrators must consider ways to continue the current practices and ways of improving upon them. In this specific system professional development decisions are mainly made by administrators. The data imply that the decisions made over the past three years have been sound decisions.

Implications For Higher Education Curriculum Developers

The data in this study imply that higher education curriculum developers might consider a review of their coursework requirements and content. Many teachers enter the field feeling unprepared to handle the behavior problems they encounter on a daily basis. Perhaps the curriculum needs to be reevaluated with the emphasis of the reevaluation being means of preparing pre-service teachers for classroom management. The implication is that if the teacher is better prepared to handle student misbehavior they can experience greater success with regards to student achievement during their earlier years of teaching.

Recommendations

It is recommended that this study be replicated on a wider scale examining teachers' perceptions in rural, urban, and suburban schools. This study only looked at one

school system in one Southeastern state. The research could be more widely applied if it contained more school systems in a variety of locations.

With regards to forming teacher-student relationships and the quality of said relationships, this study used quantitative methods and limited qualitative methods. Perhaps more sustainable data could be retrieved from a more intense qualitative study. More intensive probing of the subject could be achieved through the conducting of a case study.

This study delved into the relationships formed by teachers and students. The study should be replicated examining the relationships of administrators and teachers and how their relationships affect school climate. These relationships need to be examined to determine whether they can prove to be an instrument for increasing student achievement. This study focused on one school system which provided a limited number of participants. This study should be replicated in a more broad location

This study considered a limited number of discipline programs and how they stress the importance of teacher-student relationships. Other discipline programs need to be studied to determine if the importance of teacher-student relationships is a common thread among discipline systems.

There was a decrease in the number of office referrals processed at each of the schools in the Alexander City School district after teachers participated in the professional development activities to improve classroom management. Further research can be conducted to study the relationship between these professional development activities and the number of office referrals written by teachers. Other areas of

recommendation for further research include the study of the influence of race and gender on teacher-student relationships.

Summary

The formulation of teacher-student relationships is fundamental in the maintenance of a positive school climate. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the K-12 teachers in a school district toward the effectiveness of professional development activities that focused on teacher-student relationships and school climate. The study was framed around the following four research questions:

1. What is the relationship between professional development activities to improve classroom management and teacher-student relationships?
2. To what extent have continuous professional development activities improve classroom management impacted teacher perceptions of school climate?
3. To what extent have continuous professional development activities improve classroom management affected teacher perceptions of teacher-student relationships?
4. To what extent have professional development activities improve classroom management affected the methods of classroom management utilized by teachers?

The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between the professional development activities provided for teachers and the perceived teacher-student relationships present after teachers participated in these activities.

A sample of the K-12 teachers of the Alexander City School System was used in the study. Ninety-five K-12 teachers participated in the study. All participants completed the *Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student*

Relationships on School Climate Survey. The Alexander City School System is located in Alexander City, Alabama.

A review of relevant literature revealed that teacher-student relationships are a major factor in the success of classroom management at the classroom level and school climate at the building level. The data collected from the study implies that the professional development activities conducted by the school system have been successful in promoting efforts to achieve positive teacher-student relationships that have in turn had a positive affect on school climate. Statistically significant data emerged supporting the theory that effective professional development practices can lead to the enhancement of teacher-student relationships and the improvement of school climate. The qualitative data revealed that the professional development activities provided teachers with useful strategies to help with classroom management and the fostering of teacher-student relationships.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate

Please respond to the statements by marking your answer on the instrument. Return the instrument in the envelope provided to your Department Head or designated Team Leader.

Beverly Price
335 Thomas Rd.
Alexander City, AL 35010
Auburn University
Doctoral Program

Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate

Section 1

This survey will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities to encourage positive teacher-student relationships and improve overall school climate within the schools of the Alexander City School District. This survey will measure the perceptions of the teachers within the Alexander City School District with regards to conditions before and after participating in professional development activities. Please respond to the questions below as truthfully as possible. This survey should not take any longer than 20 minutes of your time. Please feel free to use additional paper if needed.

Demographics: Circle the appropriate response for each item.

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Grade Level of School: Elementary Middle High
3. Number of Years Experience as a Teacher:

   a.) 0-3 b.) 4-10 c.) 11-15 d.) 16-20 e.) 20+

Section II

Directions: To complete the survey, read each statement carefully. On the rating scale to the left of the question, **CIRCLE** the letter that best describes your general beliefs about the statement **before you participated** in Discipline with Dignity professional development activities. On the rating scale to the right of the questions, **CIRCLE** the letter that best describes your general beliefs about the statement **after you participated** in Discipline with Dignity professional development activities. The letters on the scale denote the following beliefs: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. **Please be aware that there are no right or wrong answers!!!**

Professional Development

Rating Scale Before	Statement	Rating Scale After
SD D A SA	1. Professional development activities provide ideas and strategies that are helpful with classroom management.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	2. Professional development provided adequately addresses the need for strong teacher-student relationships.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	3. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have been ongoing.	SD D A SA

Before	Statement	After
SD D A SA	4. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have been relevant to the needs of the teachers.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	5. Professional development activities to improve school climate and discipline have provided for adequate practice of the strategies and ideas introduced.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	6. Teachers have been provided with adequate follow-up to the professional development activities.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	7. Teachers are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the professional development activities.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	8. My pre-service (college courses) provided me adequate training to effectively manage my classroom.	SD D A SA

Teacher-Student Relationships

Before	Statement	After
SD D A SA	9. Teachers in this school make efforts to form relationships with their students.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	10. Teachers in this school show respect for all of their students.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	11. Teachers in this school look at the causes of student misbehavior.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	12. Teachers in this school view misbehaviors as directed toward them personally.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	13. Teachers in this school view discipline as a strategy to teach students alternate behaviors.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	14. Teachers in this school want all students to achieve.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	15. Teachers in this school take extra measures to help students achieve.	SD D A SA

Before	Statement	After
SD D A SA	16. Teachers in this school take extra measures to understand and meet the needs of students beyond academic needs.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	17. Teachers in this school treat all students fairly.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	18. Teachers in this school listen to students.	SD D A SA

School Climate

Before	Statement	After
SD D A SA	19. This school is a supportive and inviting place for students.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	20. Students at this school show respect for their peers.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	21. Students at this school show respect for the faculty and staff.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	22. Students at this school show respect for school property.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	23. Students at this school show respect for the rules and procedures of the school.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	24. This school clearly communicates the consequences for breaking school rules.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	25. The administrators at this school handle discipline problems fairly.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	26. The administrators at this school are supportive of teachers in the discipline strategies they choose to use.	SD D A SA
SD D A SA	27. This school is a safe place for faculty, staff, and students.	SD D A SA

Section III

Directions: Please respond to questions below as truthfully as possible. Additional sheets of paper may be attached if needed.

28. In your opinion, what were the best strategies introduced during Discipline with Dignity. Please list.

29. Have you started/stopped writing discipline referrals for any behaviors that you did/did not write discipline referrals for before participating in Discipline with Dignity professional development activities? If yes, please list these behaviors and tell if you started or stopped writing discipline referrals for these behaviors.

30. Have the Discipline with Dignity professional development activities been beneficial to you in the formation of teacher-student relationships? If yes, please explain.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

1856 2006

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Sesquicentennial

LETTER OF INFORMATION
for Research Study Entitled:

Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to determine your perceptions of the professional development activities you participated in over the past two years. You have been chosen because you participated in the initial professional development activities during the fall of 2005 and/or the follow-up professional development activities during the fall of 2006 and throughout the school years of 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.

This study is being conducted by Beverly P. Price, the assistant principal at William L. Radney Elementary School, under the supervision of Dr. Maria Witte, Associate Professor of Adult Education at Auburn University. I am interested in learning if the professional development activities have fostered the development of teacher-student relationships that have in turn had a positive effect on school climate. As stated earlier, because you have participated in the professional development activities, as the primary researcher, I have chosen to survey each of you, as the total population for my study strictly on a volunteer basis.

If you decide to participate, I assure you that all of the data collected from you for my study will remain completely anonymous. In addition, even though I am an administrator within the school district, there is no possibility for me to identify you based on the results of the study and my survey instrument. It should not take any longer than twenty minutes to complete the survey.

Although I was a primary presenter during the professional development activities, I am genuinely interested in your honest feedback so we can modify program elements if necessary. To lessen any potential discomforts you may have, I have asked your team leader/department head to distribute the questionnaires to you during one of your meetings and have you complete the questionnaire on your own time and return it to the office in the envelope provided for you so that your identity will remain anonymous. Once you have completed the questionnaire, place it in the envelope provided, seal the envelope and place it in the box marked "Teacher Perception Survey" located in the main office. The team leader/department head will collect the sealed envelopes from the box in the office and return them to me in a sealed packet.

The results from this study will be used to evaluate our professional development activities. In addition, your response will aid the district in making necessary modifications to the existing discipline program. As the primary investigator, I can assure you that there will be no personal expenses incurred from this study.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill the requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership: Administration of Elementary and Secondary Schools and for publications in professional journals, and/or presented at professional meeting, etc. You may withdraw from participation in this study at any time, without penalty; however, after you have provided anonymous information, you will be unable to withdraw your data after participation since there will be no way to identify individual information.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or its Department of Educational Leadership and the Alexander City Board of Education.

If you have any questions when you are completing this questionnaire, please direct them to your principal. If you have any questions or comments later regarding this study, please feel free to contact Beverly P. Price, the principal investigator of this study, by telephone (256) 234-8636 or email (bprice@alex.k12.al.us) and/or Dr. Maria Witte, my faculty advisor, by telephone at (334) 844 - or by email wittemm@auburn.edu. We will be happy to answer any questions. I would like to take the time to graciously thank you for helping me with my study.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or email at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Beverly Price
Investigator's signature

August 6, 2007
Date

The Auburn University
Institutional Review Board
has approved this document for use
from 4/15/07 to 4/14/08.
Protocol # 07-093 EX 0704

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN ALEXANDER CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM

ALEXANDER CITY SCHOOLS

DR. TOMMY BICE
SUPERINTENDENT

375 LEE STREET • ALEXANDER CITY, ALABAMA 35010 • 256-234-5074

March 13, 2007

Dr. Maria Witte, Associate Professor
Auburn University
4036 Haley Center
Auburn, Alabama 36849-5122

Dear Dr. Witte:

It is with great pleasure that I write to you granting permission for Mrs. Beverly Price to conduct her doctoral research study within our school system. Mrs. Price is an exemplary employee and we want to support her in any way possible in her academic and research efforts.

Mrs. Price has shared with me the focus of her research and it fits perfectly with our mission. We look forward to the results that we will use as part of our overall improvement efforts.

Should you need further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Bice, Ed.D.
Superintendent

APPENDIX D

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Office of Human Subjects Research
307 Samford Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY

Telephone: 334-844-5966
Fax: 334-844-4391
hsubjec@auburn.edu

June 6, 2007

MEMORANDUM TO: Beverly Price
Education Foundation, Leadership and Technology

PROTOCOL TITLE: "Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Professional Development and Teacher-Student Relationships on School Climate"

IRB FILE NO.: 07-093 EX 0704

APPROVAL DATE: April 15, 2007
EXPIRATION DATE: April 14, 2008

The referenced protocol was approved "Exempt" from further review under 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2) by IRB procedure on April 15, 2007. Final revisions were received on June 4, 2007. You should retain this letter in your files, along with a copy of the revised protocol and other pertinent information concerning your study. If you should anticipate a change in any of the procedures authorized in this protocol, you must request and receive IRB approval prior to implementation of any revision. Please reference the above IRB file number in any correspondence regarding this project.

If you will be unable to file a Final Report on your project before April 14, 2008, you must submit a request for an extension of approval to the IRB no later than March 31, 2008. If your IRB authorization expires and/or you have not received written notice that a request for an extension has been approved prior to April 14, 2008, you must suspend the project immediately and contact the Office of Human Subjects Research for assistance.

A Final Report will be required to close your IRB project file. Please only use the stamped, approved information letter (enclosed) with your participants.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Human Subjects Research at 844-5966.

Sincerely,

Niki L. Johnson, JD, MBA, Director
Office of Human Subjects Research
Research Compliance Auburn University

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Jose Llanes
Dr. Maria Witte