

A CASE STUDY OF A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

by

Dianne S. Carniol

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2018

A CASE STUDY OF A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

by

Dianne S. Carniol

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2018

APPROVED BY:

Ackerman, Beth (Ed.D.), Committee Chair

Bingham, Kelly (Ed.D.), Committee Member

Hill, Christy (Ed.D.), Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to understand the decisions and life choices of students who attended East Coast Christian Alternative School (ECCAS; pseudonym). An alternative school is generally defined as a school set aside for students who are at-risk of failing (Foley & Pang, 2006). ECCAS is a Christian educational setting designed to accommodate educational, behavioral, spiritual, and medical needs of students which cannot be addressed in a traditional school setting as prescribed by local and school officials which includes the participants of the study. The theories guiding this study are Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory in that a child's development is based on a system of layers with their environment and the social cognitive theory by Bandura (2001) as it pertains to keeping the student in a social and educational atmosphere rather than removing the student entirely from a school setting. The school's population ranges from 7 to 15 students per semester and includes both genders. The grade level ranges from middle school to twelfth grade. A criterion sample was selected, and the information gleaned represents themes from five nested studies of the participants based on synthesized information and themes from students, parents, teachers and administrators. The question guiding this case study is, how does a Christian alternative school influence the lives of students attending the program? Three areas of the student's life were studied: spiritual, social, and academic. This information will be used to help future alternative schools. You will see in chapters four and five that a Christ-centered approach to education in the alternative school led to restoration and ultimately made a significant difference in the lives of each of the participants.

keywords: alternative school, suspension, expulsion, nested case, social cognitive,
Christian Education

Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my loving family. My husband who was always so thoughtful, caring and helpful during the long period of time it took me to complete this manuscript and in the end, finish my degree. My children were also beneficial in the completion of this manuscript. They gave up precious time that we could have spent together and were always so encouraging and loving. This was a goal that I couldn't have reached without the support and love of my awesome family. I am so blessed.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the help of my peers and colleagues at Liberty Christian Academy. Mrs. Ferrin who was always willing to help and Mrs. Barnhart and Mr. Murphy, friends who always encouraged me and had faith that I could complete this task. This degree would not have been possible for me to attain without the support and encouragement of my friends, husband, and children.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
List of Abbreviations	11
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	12
Overview.....	12
Background.....	13
Social Component of Alternative Schools.....	16
Theoretical Context for Research	18
Situation to Self.....	19
Problem Statement.....	21
Purpose Statement.....	21
Significance of the Study	22
Research Questions.....	23
Definitions.....	24
Summary.....	26
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	28
Overview.....	28
Theoretical Framework.....	30
Bioecological Systems Theory	30
Social Cognitive Theory	32
Related Literature.....	33

Zero Tolerance	33
When Did Zero Tolerance Policies Begin?	35
What is the Punishment for Zero Tolerance Policies?	36
Suggested Alternatives to Zero Tolerance	37
Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Plan (SWPBS)	39
Diversion Programs, A Civil Citation Program	40
In School Versus Out of School Suspension	41
Expulsion	42
Alternative Schools and Settings	43
Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances.....	45
Private Schools.....	46
Mission of Christian Schools	46
Challenges Experienced by Christian Schools	47
Summary	48
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	51
Overview.....	51
Design	51
Research Questions.....	53
Setting	54
Participants.....	55
Procedures.....	56
The Researcher's Role.....	57
Data Collection	58

Questionnaires.....58

Interviews.....60

Documents65

Data Analysis65

 Within Nested Case Analysis.....65

 Across Nested Case Analysis.....66

Trustworthiness.....66

 Credibility67

 Dependability and Confirmability67

 Transferability.....68

Ethical Considerations68

Summary.....69

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS70

 Overview.....70

 Participants.....71

 Ethan71

 Ava.....71

 Jacob72

 Katie.....72

 Alexander72

 Jerimiah.....72

 Superintendent, Dr. Smith.....73

 Founder/Principal, Mr. Jones73

Pastor Jamal	74
Principal, Mr. Harris	74
Teacher/Facilitator, Mrs. Johnson.....	74
Teacher/Facilitator, Mrs. Miller.....	75
Results.....	75
Theme Development.....	75
Research Question Responses.....	79
Summary.....	82
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	84
Overview.....	84
Summary of Findings.....	84
Theoretical Discussion.....	86
Empirical Discussion	87
Implications.....	88
Theoretical Implications	89
Empirical Implications.....	89
Practical Implications.....	90
Delimitations and Limitations.....	91
Recommendations for Future Research	91
Summary.....	92
References.....	94
APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter	101
APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter.....	102

APPENDIX C: IRB Approval Consent Form Participant	103
APPENDIX D: IRB Approval Consent Non-Student	105
APPENDIX E: Beginning Survey - Questionnaire	107
APPENDIX F: Interview Questions for Students.....	108
APPENDIX G: Interview Questions for Parents	109
APPENDIX H: Interview Questions for School Pastor, Teachers, and Administrators	110
APPENDIX I: Interview Questions for Founder	111
APPENDIX J: Focus Group Questions	112
APPENDIX K: Table of Participants	113
APPENDIX L: Sample Interview	114
APPENDIX M: Codes, Sub Themes, and Themes.....	121
APPENDIX N: Stakes Worksheet	122
APPENDIX O: Audit Trail.....	123
APPENDIX P: Dartmouth Permission Letter.....	124

List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Christian Alternative School (CAS)

Civil Citation (CC)

East Coast Christian Alternative School (ECCAS)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

In-school Suspension (ISS)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Out-of-school Suspension (OSS)

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

School Referral Reduction Protocol (SRRP)

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Each year millions of students are suspended or expelled from schools across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Many students who are suspended or expelled from the public schools are either assigned to or select an alternative school to attend during their suspension or expulsion. This qualitative case study examined one particular Christian alternative school and the perspectives of students who attended. Often, students who are suspended or expelled from school find themselves alone and lost (Skiba, 2014).

There are many alternative schools available; however, East Coast Christian Alternative School (ECCA; pseudonym) not only works with behavior problems and academics, it emphasizes the spiritual aspect of a student. This school reaches out to the whole person, body, mind and soul. ECCAS is the only Christian alternative school available to students who are expelled or suspended from other schools. Many private Christian schools are small and the funding is limited since there is no federal funding for a private Christian school. The lack of funding also limits the services available to the students with learning and/or behavioral challenges. Students attending private Christian schools also have a strong honor code that they must adhere to, and when students are suspended from a public school, it is very rare to have a Christian alternative school available which makes ECCAS a unique opportunity for students in the surrounding area. ECCAS, because of its location, is geographically situated close to nearby Christian schools in an attempt to accommodate their students with behavioral issues. This case study not only fills a gap in information about Christian alternative schools but sheds light on successful strategies in helping these students find meaning for their lives. Many students have a hard time coming back from a suspension or expulsion. Eric Holder, an Attorney General said,

“far too many students across the country are diverted from the path to succeed by unnecessarily harsh discipline policies and practices that exclude them from school for minor infractions” (Dickerson, 2014, p. 6).

Many students find their lives headed down the wrong path after altercations at school and the punishments that go with their actions. There have been many articles written about children’s lives (Kruse, 2012; Mallett, 2016; Skiba, 2014) after being suspended or expelled, and names have been given to this phenomenon such as the “school-to-prison pipeline” (p. 15). There needs to be alternatives and examining ECCAS can fill the gap in literature on distinctly Christian alternative schools. This intrinsic case study was conducted at ECCAS, which is a division of a large Christian school. It is located near the East coast of the United States in a city with approximately 80,000 people and many colleges in the area (Cubit, 2015). ECCAS began in 2012 with a small number of students. It has grown and the enrollment is now between 7 and 15 students per semester. The school is located on the same campus with a Christian school. ECCAS is located in one or more self-contained classrooms in a large building, which also contains the Christian school. There is an activity area provided for physical education. Some classes for ECCAS are online through a Christian online school, and others are taught by the on-site Christian school certified teachers.

Background

Students misbehaving in school is not a new concept. The offenses have changed over the years. The offenses have escalated to gun violence in the schools along with the other tirade of behavior problems over the years. There was a time when teachers would put a dunce hat on the student and make him/her sit in the corner. Times have changed based on political correctness and children’s rights (Kruse, 2012). Some schools such as Marion County Schools

in Florida still permit corporal punishment (Morones, 2016). There are many ideas on how to handle student behavior.

Students are dealing with the effects of their behavior based on the punishment inflicted. The elementary school, as well as the high school, has its share of student behavior situations that need to be dealt with; however, this study addresses the middle and high school aged students. Many situations in the elementary schools are dealt with by writing sentences or miss a few minutes of recess; however, in high school, students have much more stringent punishments. Many schools are using a zero tolerance policy which treats all infractions equally.

Zero tolerance policies were developed in the early 1990s. During this time, there was a surge in school violence. School shootings became a problem during this era. The federal government responded with the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994, which was meant to crack down on school violence. Shortly after the Gun-Free Schools Act was passed, law enforcement departments began using the broken windows theory as suggested by Wilson and Kelling (Steenbeek & Kreis, 2015). The broken windows theory was a way to handle minor infractions with the hope that more serious crimes could be prevented by dealing harshly with the minor violations (Gjelten, 2017). All of this together brought the zero tolerance policies into being. This is a problem for many students who find themselves in trouble when they have never been a behavior problem in their life but made a simple mistake and find themselves suspended or expelled from school (Sullivan, Dollard, Sellers, & Mayo, 2010). Zero tolerance policies were meant for infractions that dealt with guns and drugs; however, to make things easier on the school level, administrators began using the same policy to punish minor infractions such as fighting and breaking classroom rules (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Both in-school-suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school-suspensions (OSS) can vary in length; however, OSS is usually for a longer period of time. When the students are arrested or removed from their schools for a long period of time, normally up to ten days (Blomberg, 2004), they are usually placed in an alternative school (Kruse, 2012). Alternative schools began in the 1970s to service students whose needs could not be met in the traditional schools due to many situations, with behavior issues being one of the problem areas (Sisk, 2017).

Students who are suspended for a short period of time, such as a week or two, are often left on their own. Parents usually do not have enough time off work to be able to stay home with the student, which leaves the adolescent home alone. Research suggests that students who are suspended or expelled from school have a much higher chance of getting into trouble again than students who attend school regularly (Teske, Huff, & Graves, 2013).

Researchers have examined alternatives for zero tolerance policies. There are suggestions that zero tolerance policies are not doing what they intended. Zero tolerance policies have created a lot of controversy in the field of education. Allman and Slate (2011) share, “Researchers have suggested that zero-tolerance policies might not be effective in reducing serious behavior and might actually increase the likelihood of future suspensions of students and lead to academic failure and student dropout” (p. 4). Some schools have tried using ISS. There are still problems with this concept because the basis of this punishment is solitude and isolation. This does not address the problem of taking the student out of the learning environment. These programs affect student self-esteem and thus cause more problems (Mallett, 2016).

There have been other alterations to the zero tolerance policies; however, many still include OSS. Some schools have looked at using different behavioral assessment tools and others have looked at creating a new atmosphere for the students involved with zero tolerance

punishments. One alternative method of handling behavior is the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support plan (SWPBS) (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016). SWPBS is put in place to help offset zero tolerance policies. It is the idea that by giving positive supports to students there will be less behavioral problems, resulting in a lesser use of the zero tolerance policies. This plan brings its own set of problems, such as implementation and lack of consistency (Feuerborn et al., 2016).

Another alteration of the zero tolerance policies is the School Referral Reduction Protocol plans (SRRP) (Teske et al., 2013, p. 423). These plans have helped reduce the number of students arrested at schools and the number of court cases. SRRP helped bring to light the idea that discipline is not a one-size-fits-all and that each case should be looked at individually.

Social Component of Alternative Schools

The number of alternative schools has grown since the legislation of zero tolerance in the 1960s and 1970s. These schools are set up to keep students in a school type atmosphere without allowing them to be in the general school population. Kennedy-Lewis (2015) says, “Interest in alternative programs has increased in conjunction with concerns regarding the high cost to society of high school dropouts” (p. 148). Alternative schools provide educational opportunities and some limited social interaction. There are different levels of alternative schools and what they provide. Many times, students who attend these schools are referred to as non-traditional students. Alternative schools help students who might be contemplating dropping out of school altogether. These schools are set up to help or rehabilitate students rather than reforming them, which might actually be the last push before they drop out of school. These schools have a difficult task, shares Kennedy-Lewis (2015), “Teachers, schools, and districts are caught in a quandary about how to teach standards to students who may not be prepared to learn them” (pp.

164-165). Teachers working in alternative schools with students who have been placed there for behavior issues need additional training in the area of psychology to help them better understand how to work with students in these various situations. According to Kennedy-Lewis (2015), more studies need to be done to learn how to reach out to students who have been suspended or expelled from schools and work with them to get back in and stay in school.

Alternative schools help students maintain a type of school atmosphere, which is important for the student socially. Teske et al. (2013) shared that “school connectedness, is linked to school attendance, graduation rates, and improved academics” (p. 419). These alternative schools help to bridge the gap for students that are suspended or expelled from school. There are thousands of alternative schools both public and private across the United States trying to service students who have been either suspended or expelled from school (Kruse, 2012). ECCAS is the type of alternative school that seeks to help students that do not fit the public school mold. The National Center for Education Statistics (Carver, Lewis, & Tice, 2010) categorizes these type of alternative schools as, schools that

are designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools. The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at risk of educational failure (as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school. (p. 1)

ECCAS is not only concerned with keeping the student in a social school setting, but it is also tries to minister to the student’s spiritual needs which is what makes it unique to other alternative schools. ECCAS’s goal is restoration of the student into society (ECCAS, 2017). Not only does it provide academic instruction, but ECCAS also provides good spiritual mentors for the students as well as a campus pastor to address spiritual needs.

Theoretical Context for Research

There are various theories that are prevalent to student behavioral problems of adolescence. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory is the foundational theory behind this study (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner uses a system through which a child's environment is the main emphasis of their development. He defines layers of the environment and discusses how these layers influence the growth and development of a child. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory consists of four layers. The layer closest to the child is the microsystems, next is the mesosystem which provides connections to other systems, the exosystem is next and it deals with a child's social considerations, and finally the macrosystem which is the outermost system which deals with culture and values (1994). The main layer that this case study delved into is the microsystem. This layer deals with a child's closest relationships and structures: family, school, and neighborhood environments (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Bandura (2001) developed the social cognitive theory (SCT), which is also important to this study. The social cognitive theory bases its foundation on the idea that people learn by mimicking what they see and hear (Bandura, 2001). This theory suggests that a person's environment is a large factor in their behavior and attitude. This aspect makes it important for students to remain in a school atmosphere such as an alternative school rather than being removed from it and left at home on their own.

Another important part of social cognitive theory is self-efficacy. Bandura (2001) also suggested that self-efficacy plays an important part of a student's behavior and personality. Bandura proposes that people set their goal levels based on their self-efficacy, which is a part of the social cognitive theory.

Bandura (1989) based the social cognitive theory on his historic experiment with Bobo, the doll. He found that people imitate actions and behaviors they see and experience (Bandura, 1989). When people use a little forethought, they can stimulate themselves and make better decisions for their future. When done over a prolonged period of time, this forethought could offer direction, logic, and meaning to a person's life. This plays such an important role in the argument to keep students in an educational setting, such as an alternate school, rather than suspending or expelling a student from school. Dickerson (2014) stated in his study, "Zero tolerance policies reject developmental needs of children, deny educational opportunities by contributing to dropouts, produce poor achievement, and criminalize student behavior" (p. 4).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the child's interaction with his or her environment fuels their development. The child's family and social atmosphere includes the community and school. This level or microsystem deals with the way these two entities interact. When there is a problem within any of these relationships, it causes a ripple effect that can cause stress for the child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001, p. 1). Being expelled or suspended is a stressful situation for not only the child but the entire family.

Situation to Self

I have taught for over thirty years in both public and private schools and have seen many children go through the educational system. According to Creswell (2013), my philosophical assumptions concerning this study started with the ontological assumption that there would be varied views from different people discussing the Christian alternative school. The evidence from both the school and the individuals helped form my epistemological view. There were some biases as my beliefs now favor Christian education over public schools, and I worked at the site. However, I was neutral on my observations and let the various participant values surface,

and I used good judgement as my need to adjust or reform my axiological assumptions and values toward a child's education and the educational process based on my life experiences. I looked closely at all details and used inductive logic to ensure that I arrived at proper and accurate methodological assumptions (Creswell, 2013). My paradigm was social constructivism because according to this theory, "understanding, significance, and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings" (Aminch & Asi, 2015, p. 13). I wanted enough information to be able to understand the experience of the students that attend ECCAS.

Because I am a teacher, I deal with students five days a week. I understand how important school and the school atmosphere is to a child. Over my thirty plus years of teaching, I have seen many students suspended or expelled and the negative effect it has on their lives. I have a desire to help these students any way that I can. There has been research done on alternative schools; however, more information is needed on Christian alternative schools and what they can offer a family and the individual child. Not only are the student, teachers, classmates, and family affected in this situation, but the community also feels the effects. Many times, these students develop a low self-esteem and their lives are less prosperous than they might have been if the child had chosen a different path. In the Bible, God shares the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4-6,

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." (New International Version)

These children are the proverbial lost sheep.

Problem Statement

Millions of students across the United States have been affected by zero tolerance policies (Mallett, 2016). Many students each year are being suspended or expelled from schools in the United States (Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012). Alternative schools have come into being to meet the needs of these students (Wilkerson, 2016). There are thousands of alternative schools available; however, few of these have a Christian base (Kruse, 2012). There is a Christian alternative school on the East coast of the United States that is working with students who have been suspended or expelled and many of the students attending this school go on to graduate. There has been no study done on Christian schools like ECCAS to identify the elements that make it different from other alternative schools. There are no in-depth studies of a Christian alternative school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to describe the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States. ECCAS is a Christian educational setting ministering to the individual, and complying with the Children's Health definition of accommodating the educational, behavioral, and medical needs of students that cannot be addressed in a traditional school setting (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, n.d.). The theories guiding this study were Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems and social cognitive by Bandura (2001), as it pertains to keeping the student in a social and educational setting rather than removing the student from the school atmosphere.

This was an intrinsic case study in that I studied one school at this particular time. However, there were multiple nested cases within the single case study (Stake, 2008). I talked

with the parents, students, teachers, pastor, and administrators to triangulate and analyze the information about five selected students. I selected five students based on Wolcott's (2008) idea that, "any case over 1 dilutes the level of detail that a researcher can provide" (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Then I synthesized the information and looked for themes to explain the findings. This was an intrinsic case study because it was not possible to separate the students from the school since that is what the case study involved (Stake, 1995).

Significance of the Study

The empirical significance of this study was to fill the gap in present research on alternative schools. There have been many studies done on students who have been suspended or expelled from school (Dickerson, 2014; Kruse, 2012; Skiba, 2014). There have also been many studies done on alternative schools, private/parochial alternative schools and alternative ideas for discipline (Cooling, 2014; Feuerborn et al., 2016; Sisk, 2017); however, there are no studies examining Christian alternative schools, and no study has been done on ECCAS. This case study gave relevance to other alternative schools, but the Christian element added a new contribution to the information that could have changed the outcome for the students involved (Creswell, 2013).

Theoretically, this study was an extension of both Bronfenbrenner's (2008) ecological systems theory (Paquette & Ryan, 2001) and Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). ECCAS kept the students with their peers in an alternative setting and the students were exposed to the school atmosphere, thus there were other students in the alternative school to socialize and interact with. The social element of school is such an important factor to young people. The following statement characterizes this idea, "We can no longer afford simply to throw away those who transgress in our schools" (Skiba, 2014, p. 32). This study may give

direction and insight to others desiring to start a school, using the Christian school model, to help students who do not fit the traditional education mold.

The practical significance of this intrinsic case study is to learn how a Christian alternative school system accommodates or helps students who have been suspended or expelled from traditional schools and have been assigned to alternative educational routes (Stake, 1995). This study shares how the students' lives have been affected through the Christian school route. By learning about the students' lives, the information may help other students in the future that are seeking an alternative school setting (Creswell, 2013).

Research Questions

The central question for this study was: What are the experiences and post school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States? This was the focus of the case study. Many sources I had found on alternative schools did not have the Christian element in them.

The central question was broken down into three sub-questions. The information gathered from participants answering the interview and focus questions helped me formulate lessons learned in order to answer the three sub-questions by allowing triangulation, and it also facilitated me in finding themes within the study.

RQ1: What role does attending ECCAS play in a student's academic development and post-school outcomes? Creswell (2013), uses foreshadowing of the central question to help guide the sub-questions. Mallet (2015) shares that, "Once involved with the juvenile courts, adolescents are significantly more likely to remain involved and to have recidivist outcomes" (p. 21). Thus, the purpose of this question was to evaluate the post school life of the participants in

the view of whether it reduced the future potential for involvement with the law enforcement officials.

RQ2: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student's social/behavioral development and post school outcomes? According to Bandura (2001), the social aspect is very important. Students need to be in a community of other students in order to have a sense of belonging and have other opportunities to see correct and good examples in order to have the opportunity to mimic a positive model (Bandura, 1989). The students have a positive adult role model or mentor assigned to them at ECCAS. Thus, the purpose of this question was to investigate whether the mentor or positive adult role model made a significant difference in the participant's social/behavioral development and post-school outcome.

RQ3: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student's spiritual development and post school outcomes? In a Christian alternative school the spiritual aspect would be very important. Many administrators know that when connecting with students and having a relationship with them, the students will normally, in most situations, take the less aggressive route and do the right thing because they want to please the adults (Vaandering, 2013). The Christian alternative school is a restorative setting and works with the students to not only improve them as a person, but to encourage and foster a healthy learning atmosphere. Accordingly, the purpose of this question was to evaluate the effect of the educational experience on the students' spiritual development both in school and post educational experience.

Definitions

1. *Alternative school* - An alternative school is generally defined as a school set aside for students that are at-risk of failing (Foley & Pang, 2006).

2. *Suspension* - A “disciplinary action that is administered as a consequence of a student’s inappropriate behavior, requires that a student absent him/herself from the classroom or from the school for a specified period of time” (Morrison & Skiba, 2001 p. 174).
3. *Expulsion* – Exclusion from school for a period of time (Skiba, 2014).
4. *Nested case* - A nested case–control study is comprised of subjects sampled from a collected group study (Langholz, 2005).
5. *Social cognitive* - Behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning (McLeod, 2016).
6. *In-school suspension (ISS)* –“ISS is a discipline model where a student is removed from the classroom and compelled to stay in an ISS center for a variable length of time, ranging from part of a day to several days in a row” (Blomberg, 2004, p. 2).
7. *Out-of-school suspension (OSS)* – “The removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed ten days” (Blomberg, 2004, p. 2).
8. *Emotional/behavioral disorders* – Children who exhibit abnormal externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Smith, 2014).
9. *Externalizing behaviors* – “Acting-out such as aggression, impulsiveness, coercive and non-compliant” (Smith, 2014, p. 1).
10. *Internalizing behavioral disorders* – Behaviors such as “withdrawn, lonely, depressed, and anxious” (Smith, 2014, p. 1).
11. *Social disorders* – “Referring to students with conduct disorders or those youth who have been adjudicated for rule violations” (Smith, 2014, p. 1).
12. *Spiritual development* – A person’s relationship with God (Bender, 2016).

Summary

Many children in the United States receive ISS or OSS each year, and many of these are for minor infractions, yet the punishment is making major alterations to the student's life. The number of students graduating after being disciplined by nature of ISS, OSS or expulsion is also declining (Skiba, 2014). Skiba noted, "School rates of out-of-school suspensions are moderately associated with lower graduation or higher dropout rates and greater contact with the juvenile justice system" (p. 30). Skiba also found that "schools with higher suspension and expulsion rates have been found to have lower outcomes on state-wide test scores" (p. 30). Students and parents are looking for alternative schools that can help keep the students in touch with the educational community and possibly increase their education level.

There are many alternative schools; however, according to the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), ECCAS is the only Christian alternative school of its kind. This is a case study of ECCAS. This particular alternative school is focusing on the restoration of students educationally, socially, and spiritually. The findings of this case study are shared in hopes that lessons learned can be used to improve situations at ECCAS and/or help other schools and to share valuable insight with ECCAS and other schools as well. The theory guiding this case study is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, which is inherent that a student's environment and relationships are key factors in a child's development. Interactions between these factors are what shapes a child's development (Bronfennbrener, 1994). Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory is implicit that students need to be around other students which helps to solidify that students need a place to go when they are expelled or suspended.

It is not too late, and schools need to glean as much information from as many sources as possible to help students with behavior problems. It is necessary for schools to work with these students in order to restore them to the healthy students they can be.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This intrinsic case study takes an in-depth look at East Coast Christian Alternative School (pseudonym) and the students who graduate from its program. Christian education has a different worldview than a public school. This difference in beliefs permeates the educational programs and is instrumental in shaping individuals in a different frame of mind than the counterpart or public school systems (ACSI, n.d.). There have been many cases studies on alternative schools across the United States; however, this case study is unique in that the subject is a Christian alternative school.

Creswell (2013) explained that there are many approaches to inquiry, although he focused on five main types of approaches for scholars and the academic field in the areas of social, human and health sciences. These types of qualitative inquiry include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2013)

This case study sheds light on the reasons students attend alternative schools and punishments that are given for both minimal and optimal offenses, as well as how these punishments affect the student's life when handled by a specific Christian alternative school. Zero tolerance punishments of in-school and out-of-school suspensions can have life-long effects for some students (Skiba, 2014). When students do not have a good alternative for education outside of the public-school arena, being suspended or expelled can be devastating for the student (Skiba, 2014). Students looking for alternative educational routes for other reasons also need choices in alternative schools.

There are many alternative schools available for students who have faced expulsion or suspensions; however, there is only one Christian alternative school prepared to handle these

types of students. Many students who find themselves faced with ISS, OSS, and expulsion often become ostracized or alone (Mallett, 2016). Many times, these students face criminal records and make decisions to end the educational process altogether. Suspensions and expulsions drive students away from education, causing the school drop-out rate to increase: “Research shows a strong link between school arrests and drop-out rate” (Teske et al., 2013 p. 423). The Christian alternative school allows students like this to work toward a degree while still attending a school with other students and having a Biblical basis to their education, while also helping students that are there for other reasons as well. Some students are at alternative schools because the general education schools do not fit their needs or learning style.

Educators are now looking at zero tolerance policies and finding faults that need to be addressed. School districts are coming up with alternative plans for students to keep them involved with other people and in the educational system rather than kicking them out of school and their social circles altogether. Alternative schools are starting up all around the United States to handle these students, and schools are also finding alternative assessment tools to handle behavior situations.

The approach of this single case study was to research five nested cases containing five students that have graduated after having attended ECCAS in one bounded case. This qualitative intrinsic case study explored the experiences and post school outcomes of graduates to understand the role their attendance in the Christian alternative school played in their social, academic, and spiritual development. Since ECCAS is a unique alternative school, this case study can inform and enlighten the general public to options and programs that are available when facing choices to the public schools and other circumstances. The study will help students

that are forbidden to attend a public school for any period of time, as well as provide valuable information for the case itself for program improvement and development.

Theoretical Framework

Christian schools have been around for a long time (ACSI, n.d.). The Christian school that ECCAS is a division of began in 1967. The idea of a Christian alternative school is fairly new (East Coast Christian Alternative School (pseudonym website), 2017). ECCAS has been in existence for five years. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:31-32, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (NKJV). The Christian alternative school is meant to be a restorative school that helps students find their way back into society. The school in this case study works with the individual student and helps them look not only inside themselves, but to God to help them learn the right cues to fit back into society.

Bioecological Systems Theory

There are various theories that are prevalent to the area of adolescent behavior. Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) bioecological systems theory sets a good foundation for this case study. Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory has been renamed bioecological systems theory which emphasizes that it is the child’s biology that is the primary environment which actually fuels his or her development. This idea states that “it is the interaction between the various aspects of the child’s biology which directs the development” (p. 1). This case study looked closely at the micro and mesosystem layers of Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) bioecological systems theory.

The microsystem layer, which involves structures that directly relate to the student such as family, school, and other environments surrounding the individual, has the strongest impact and effect on the child. The influences in this layer are known as bi-directional influences (Bronfennbrener, 1994).

The mesosystem connects the various structures in the microsystem. It helps to bring them together and helps provide the understanding the child needs between the structures.

Another layer or system is the exosystem. This system deals with other social areas that indirectly deal with a child's social system. For example the parents' workplace schedule and how the family interacts socioeconomically with the community indirectly both positively and negatively affects the child (Bronfennbrener, 1994).

The macrosystem deals with the student's cultural values to include customs and laws. This system seems to affect each of the other layers by flowing down through the levels. This system is concerned with how parents and other significant people in a child's life treat the child due to their various circumstances (Bronfennbrener, 1994).

The chronosystem is the last layer of Bronfennbrener's bioecological systems theory (1994). This layer deals with the element of time. Children deal with time differently from each other and at different stages of their life. This layer looks at how a child handles things such as death or various aspects of aging (Bronfennbrener, 1994).

The various levels of Bronfennbrener (1994) apply directly to the student and help explain the focus of the environment and how it affects the child. It is important to understand the various influences on a child's life and how these environmental factors pertain to this study. The social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989) helps to explain how the child relates directly to a positive environment and its influences, which is essential to the study. The social cognitive

theory together with the bioecological systems theory will help people to completely understand the findings of this research and how the student interacts with their environment.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura (1989) developed the social cognitive theory, which is also important to this study. The social cognitive theory states that “personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events, behavioral patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally” (Bandura, 1999, p. 21). This theory suggests that a person’s environment is a large factor in their behavior and attitude. This aspect makes it important for students to remain in a school atmosphere rather than being removed from it and left on their own.

Another important part of the social cognitive theory is self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1999), “Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties” (p. 28). Bandura, (1999) also stated that self-efficacy plays an important part of a student’s behavior and personality. He implied that people set their goal levels based on their self-efficacy, which is a part of the social cognitive theory. Bandura also advocates that motivational levels are based on our level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). According to Bandura (2001), social behavior comes from our environment and people we imitate. ECCAS uses adult mentors to reinforce the positive values that might be missing in an alternative school setting.

The social cognitive theory plays such an important role in the argument to keep students in an educational setting rather than suspending them or expelling students and leaving them with nowhere to go. Dickerson (2014) stated in his study, “Zero tolerance policies reject

developmental needs of children, deny educational opportunities by contributing to dropouts, produce poor achievement, and criminalize student behavior” (p. 4).

The literature available cites many situations where students have been removed from their school settings either by suspensions or expulsions. This goes directly against the social cognitive theory and causes a ripple effect in the layers of the bioecological systems theory. Schools should be places of encouragement and embolden a healthy social environment. The social cognitive theory suggests that, “Much human learning occurs either deliberately or inadvertently by observing the actual behavior of others and the consequences for them” (Bandura, 1999, p. 25). This is exactly why the Christian alternative school setting is important for students who have been removed from the general classroom setting.

Students need a good learning atmosphere with positive role models in order to thrive and excel in the positive attributes that go along with education. The Christian alternative school makes sure that no child is left on their own with the mentor system, and that each child has an opportunity to learn and experience God at the same time. The Christian mentors are excellent examples for the students at ECCAS. This element of a Christian mentor is one of the major differences between ECCAS and other alternative schools.

Related Literature

The section gives some background and details concerning information relating to alternative schools and the reason for their origination. Many times, students are placed in alternative schools based on their behavior patterns that are not acceptable in traditional schools or because of certain needs that can be better addressed in an alternative school setting.

Zero Tolerance

Some of the earliest legislation connected with student behavior and alternative schools began in 1965 with President Johnson and The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which made sure that all children were provided an “equal access to education” (Munro, 2013, p. 1). There was a time in the history of education that behavior problems did not reach the extreme situations of violence and drugs in the schools and were handled by principals and teachers rather than legislature and specific strict behavioral policies (A Nation at Risk, 1983). As the American society has evolved, so has violence and bad behavior at schools, thus the *A Nation at Risk* publication in 1983. *A Nation at Risk* was published to get the attention of the general public to what was happening in the school systems of America. This very evolution brought about the policies and legislation in response to the turmoil in society today. The mass shooting at Columbine High School helped to bring in the zero tolerance behavioral policies that present day schools are using.

Henault (2001) shared some interesting facts and insights into the area of zero tolerance. She suggested that no matter what age or severity of the offense, this law is meant to treat all people the same, “The term ‘zero tolerance’ (ZT) refers to those policies which deal out severe punishment for all offenses, no matter how minor, ostensibly in an effort to treat all offenders equally in the spirit of fairness and intolerance of rule-breaking” (p. 1). Henault went on to share that “Zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems that schools confront... [and has] redefined all students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences” (p. 1). This brings up the question, are all children including junior high students and six, seven and eight-year-olds criminals? Henault shared a few situations:

In West Virginia, a seventh grader who shared a zinc cough drop with a classmate was suspended for three days pursuant to the school's antidrug policy because the cough drop

was not cleared with the office. In North Carolina, a six year-old kissed his classmate (he claimed she asked him to do so); he was suspended for one day for violating the school's rule which precluded "unwarranted and unwelcome touching." In Louisiana, a second-grader brought his grandfather's watch to school for show and tell. The watch had a one-inch-long pocketknife attached; pursuant to the school's weapons policy, the child was suspended and sent to an alternative school for a month. (p. 1)

There are so many examples of inappropriate punishments placed on children that are not deserving of a punishment at all. People need to use common sense as well as the law when dealing with children. Each situation has its own set of circumstances. There is a fine line in some cases; however, others are clearly not the way God would have intended for people in power to misuse this authority.

When Did Zero Tolerance Policies Begin?

Zero tolerance policies are behavior plans that institutions adopt to maximize education and a safe learning environment while minimizing violent behavior. These types of plans began in the 1990s. During this era, there were school shootings such as Columbine High School, and the general thought was that more legislation was needed to make schools safer (Sullivan et al., 2010). Congress came up with the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994, which was the beginning of one-year expulsions for students. The legislature put the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was enacted by President Johnson in 1965, into effect to ensure public schools were using zero tolerance policies by limiting funding of those who were not using the plan (McAndrews, 2001).

Zero tolerance policies were meant for infractions that dealt with guns and drugs; however, to make things easier on the school level, administrators began using the same policy to punish minor infractions such as fighting and breaking classroom rules (Sullivan et al., 2010).

What is the Punishment for Zero Tolerance Policies?

The Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994 gave a one-year suspension for infractions of this law (Dickerson, 2014). Typical punishment for a major offense, such as guns or drugs, could be an ISS or an OSS. Many student offenders are arrested and given out-of-school suspensions (Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012). This consequence is easier for a school district because they do not have to handle the student. Usually these students are referred to the criminal justice system and sent to court where they will begin their criminal record (Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012).

Both ISS and OSS can be long or short; however, OSS is usually for a longer period of time. When students are arrested or removed from their schools for a long duration of time, they are usually placed in an alternative school. Students suspended for a short period of time, such as a week or two, are often left on their own. Parents usually do not have enough time off work to be able to stay home with the student, which leaves the adolescent home alone. Studies suggest that students who have been suspended or expelled from school have a much higher chance of getting into trouble again than students who attend school regularly (Teske et al., 2013).

Zero tolerance policies are accredited with the large school dropout rate that the United States is experiencing (Mongan & Walker, 2012). Research shows that many students that are caught in the ISS, OSS, and expulsion behavioral punishment situations usually find themselves back in the same situation later in school (Mongan & Walker, 2012). These students find it hard to remove themselves from the stigma that goes with this type of punishment.

There are many researchers who discuss the school-to-prison pipeline effect (Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012; Mongan & Walker, 2012). These research findings suggest that a suspension is just the beginning of a student's road to prison. Many students are repeat offenders. Researchers are looking at zero tolerance policies from legal aspects as well as the psychological harm they are causing the youth of today. Mongan and Walker (2012) took their research of students that have been removed from school due to an ISS or OSS a little deeper, stating, "these policies are theoretically unsound, are empirically unsupported, and fall prey to several legal critiques" (p. 232). There has been much controversy over the legality of removing students from an educational site.

The psychological disadvantages that a student experiences, as a result of zero tolerance policies, outweigh the good (Nolan, 2011). Students, once started down the road of being looked at as a criminal, find it hard to change that perception. In a qualitative ethnographic study, Nolan (2011) suggested, "through a host of what often amounted to nothing more than minor school infractions and refusals of compliance, they (students) become implicated in the production of themselves as a criminalized class" (p. 232).

Suggested Alternatives to Zero Tolerance

Researchers have looked at alternatives for zero tolerance policies. According to some researchers, there are suggestions that zero tolerance policies are not doing what they were intended (Allman & Slate, 2011). Zero tolerance policies have created a lot of controversy in the field of education. Allman and Slate (2011) shared, "Researchers have suggested that zero-tolerance policies might not be effective in reducing serious behavior and might actually increase the likelihood of future suspensions of students and lead to academic failure and student dropout" (p. 4). Some schools have tried using ISS. There are still problems with this concept

because the basis of this punishment is solitary and isolation. Solitary and isolation of a student does not address the problem of helping the student; it only serves to take the student out of the learning environment. These programs affected student self-esteem and thus caused more problems (Skiba, 2014).

Another alteration of the zero tolerance policies is the School Referral Reduction Protocol plans (SRRP) (Teske et al., 2013, p. 423). These plans help reduce the number of students arrested at schools and the number of court cases (Teske et al., 2013). This program helped bring to light the idea that discipline is not a one-size-fits-all and that each case should be looked at individually.

Restorative justice is another alternative to zero tolerance. There are different approaches to this type of program; however, one of the most common ideas is to mend or develop better relationships among students and others that are directly involved such as teachers, administrators, parents and the community as a whole (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). There are many options for this process such as “peer mediation programs, classroom community meetings, youth courts, or community circles” (p. 15).

Many times, using the idea of circles is the most common method with many variations in the types of circles. The circles are a good method for restorative justice, because there is more control by using a “facilitator” and a “talking piece” which allows individuals an opportunity to be heard and the opportunity to speak (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014, p. 15). This method was used in a school in Boston and had great results. In these circles, they identify the harm, let people share how it impacted them, and suggest ways for the student to repair the harm that has been caused (p. 16). Circles allow students the opportunity to see teachers, principals, and community members sharing, helping and guiding them as they (the students) work toward

restoration and repairing the wrong they have done. The method of using circles helps to strengthen the relationships of everyone involved (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014).

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Plan (SWPBS)

There have been other alterations to the zero tolerance policies; however, many still include OSS. Some schools have looked at using different behavioral assessment tools and others have looked at creating a new atmosphere for the students involved with zero tolerance punishments. One alternative method of handling behavior is the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support plan (SWPBS) (Feuerborn et al., 2016). This plan is put in place to help offset zero tolerance policies. It is the idea that by giving positive supports to students there will be less behavioral problems, resulting in a lesser use of the zero tolerance policies. This plan brings its own set of problems such as implementation and lack of consistency.

Studies on the effectiveness of the SWPBS program began as early as the late 1990s. SWPBS began simply as Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). SWPBS is a three-tier program that is customized to work at each school it is implemented into. There are positive outcomes associated with SWPBS when it is implemented properly and the staff is onboard with the program (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2013). In order to make a program like SWPBS work, “it is essential to have approximately 80% of the staff committed to working with the system” (Lassen et al., 2006, p. 28).

There has been a lot of research done on SWPBS programs and other variations of SWPBS. In the United States, there are over 9,000 schools implementing a form of SWPBS plans (Kurth & Enyart, 2016). This is one program that has seen success working with students having behavioral type issues in the public-school setting as mentioned in the research for this case study (Feuerborn et al., 2013; Kurth & Enyart, 2016; Lassen et al., 2006). Even though

SWPBS has found some success in schools, there are still some students that need more help than this type of program can provide for them. Students who do not fit the mold for this type of program usually need more aggressive types of programs to individually fit their needs.

Diversions Programs, A Civil Citation Program

Another type of program that was implemented to try to alleviate some of the court case work from the zero tolerance policies was diversion programs such as the civil citation (CC) program which was initiated in Florida (Sullivan et al., 2010). This program was aimed at students with no more than one prior misdemeanor charge. These types of programs were meant to keep students in their school environment while punishing them for their offense. Diversion programs are meant to help the student in the long run by cutting down on recidivism for young offenders (Sullivan et al. 2010). These programs help to reduce the amount of time that courts normally spend with youth to a minimal. The youth in the CC program were diverted from the juvenile justice system and given community service projects in lieu of being sent to court (Sullivan et al. 2010). Students were given a project to do and had to complete the project within a 21-day time frame. If the student was unsuccessful in completing the program within the time allotted, they would then be referred to the juvenile system and the normal procedure for that offense, before the civil citation was issued, would be warranted (Sullivan et al., 2010, p. 282).

Parents were a part of the CC program and had specific requirements they had to fulfill as well. The CC program was a family oriented plan to help the students and a way to keep the students in their regular school setting while the student and family performed an intervention for the offense of the child (Sullivan et al. 2010). One of the major goals of the CC program was to help the students without court intervention. The feeling behind this thought was that students

need a second chance before they become stigmatized with the labels, such as trouble makers, and become a part of the court system while they are still young (Sullivan et al. 2010, p. 280).

In School Versus Out of School Suspension

Making a judgement of ISS or OSS is very important for any school system when dealing with behavioral problems. One of the most important aspects school officials have to keep in mind is “Providing a safe, supportive, and focused classroom that allows students an opportunity to learn and grow” (Blomberg, 2004, p. 1). According to Blomberg (2004), an ISS by definition is, “disciplinary action that is administered as a consequence of a student’s inappropriate behavior, requires that a student absent him/herself from the classroom or from the school for a specified period of time” (p. 1), while an OSS is “the removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed ten days” (p. 2). The time limit varies from school to school; however, the basic precepts are the same.

The OSSs came into being during the mid-sixties and early seventies, an era of drugs, gangs, and classroom shootings because schools thought they needed tougher discipline in order to protect the students in the general population. However, OSSs have been the origin of many studies due to the negative effects this procedure has on the students involved. According to researchers, the students who are facing expulsion are the students that really need help and the OSSs are forcing them to leave a system that could possibly help rehabilitate these students (Teske et al., 2013). The argument that the students who receive OSS need adult supervision is one of the big issues that faces this situation. Many parents work and students are left at home alone when they receive an OSS. Iselin (2010) shared, “Students who are frequently suspended are also less likely to have parental supervision at home, and yet research indicates that these students are more in need of adult supervision than are students who are not suspended” (p. 2).

Research reveals that ISSs have mixed outcomes (Blomberg, 2004). Each school district has its own unique way of handling ISSs. Some methods are effective while others leave a lot of room for criticism. Some schools use cameras to monitor the ISS, which allows students much leeway and time for sleep, versus ISS rooms with supervisors and set rules and objectives for the students involved (Blomberg, 2004). There are many situations that need to be addressed in an ISS. One of the biggest problems is finding a room for the students and paying an educator to be a facilitator in the room. There are many other problems and guidelines that need to be addressed in using an ISS.

Expulsion

Expulsion is commonly defined as, “The student is separated from the educational process, and the school district may not be obligated to provide any further educational or counseling services for the student” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013, p. 1001). When students are expelled, they are forced to leave the school and all their friends, acquaintances, or companions. These students are left on their own, in some situations, and others are given various types of support such as homebound tutors. Luke Dang (2013), a student who went from being a top student ultimately to a drop-out because of expulsion experiences said this,

After getting expelled, every insult against “bad” students and dropouts rang in my ears louder than before. I was now one of the outcasts shunned by the world, not because I was a liar, a thief, or a killer...but because I didn't graduate from school. (p. 1)

Students need to be with other students and have the companionship of others. Having an adult who cares about their well-being and future is something every child needs. Students who find themselves at home alone after receiving an OSS while parents are at work, lack the leadership

and companionship of an adult figure. This study shows how ECCAS handles the lack of parental supervision for students that have been put on OSS or been expelled from their school.

Alternative Schools and Settings

Alternative schools are set up to keep students in a school type atmosphere without allowing them to be in the general school public. Kennedy-Lewis (2015) suggested “interest in alternative programs has increased in conjunction with concerns regarding the high cost to society of high school dropouts” (p. 148). Students still need a place to go when they are removed from the general school classroom.

Alternative schools provide educational opportunities and some limited social interaction. There are different levels of alternative schools and what they provide. Many times, students attending these schools are referred to as non-traditional students because they have exhibited behavior or social patterns that are not allowed in the traditional public schools (Kennedy-Lewis 2015). Alternative schools help students who might be contemplating dropping out of school altogether. Most alternative schools are set up to help students that have been removed from the general public due to some type of behavioral policy infringement.

Freedom Schools and the Free School Movement began in the 1960s, and this is where alternative schools actually got their start. Today, it is estimated that there are over 20,000 alternative schools in the United States (Quinn & Poirier, 2006). Some alternative schools focus on students with IEPs and others focus on students that have been transferred or expelled from their school due to emotional or behavioral situations. Some schools take a combination of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and behavioral problems (Quinn & Poirier, 2006). ECCAS helps students that have been removed from the public school due to some behavioral problems, and it also helps some students who have IEPs. Most alternative

schools are set up to help students by giving them a place to be rather than restoring them, which might actually be the last push before they drop out of school. These schools have a difficult task. Kennedy-Lewis (2015) shares, “Teachers, schools, and districts are caught in a quandary about how to teach standards to students who may not be prepared to learn them” (pp. 164-165). According to research (Carver et al., 2010), teachers in alternative schools need additional training in the area of psychology to help them better understand how to work with students in these various situations. In a study by Quinn and Poirier (2006), the researchers cite that educators in the alternative schools they studied attend extra workshops and professional development seminars to help them better deal with the student body at the alternative school where they work. According to Kennedy-Lewis (2015), more studies need to be done to learn how to reach students who have been suspended or expelled from schools and work with them to get back in and stay in school.

Alternative schools help students maintain somewhat of a school atmosphere, which is important for the student socially. Teske et al. (2013) shared that “school connectedness, is linked to school attendance, graduation rates, and improved academics” (p. 419). These alternative schools help to bridge the gap for students that are suspended or expelled from school. There are thousands of alternative schools, both public and private, across the U.S. trying to service students that have been either suspended or expelled from school (Kruse, 2012).

There has been minimal research on the effectiveness of alternative programs; however, most findings show that students did get credits they needed while under the suspension or expulsion when attending an alternative school (Wilkerson, 2016). Many articles are focused on whether the students continue on the educational path or down the path to criminal activity after experiencing a zero tolerance punishment of suspension or expulsion (Mallett, 2016).

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances

Alternative schools accommodate students with a range of problems from behavioral to emotional. Students who cause a disruption in the general education classroom setting are those that usually fall prey to the zero tolerance policies. These are the students who receive ISS or OSS, or are expelled. When looking at an alternative school setting, these are the students that are normally found. Students who are labeled with specific emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) fall into a different category of special students and have distinct legislation that prevents these students from being expelled (Wilkerson, Afacan, Perzigian, Justin, & Lequia, 2016).

The federal government has set aside special programs for students labeled as EBD. Students who display outward emotional behaviors or externalizing their behavior disorder occasionally have to be removed from the traditional school setting (Wilkerson et al., 2016). These students can attend alternative schools if the parents desire to send them there for the smaller class size or just to ease peer pressure of the general education classroom. In some situations, it is the school that makes the decision to remove a child from the general education classroom due to special circumstances associated to behavior or emotions. Sometimes students with emotional disorders need a different type of classroom setting to meet their individual needs and alternative schools have stepped up in this aspect. Studies have been done and it is established that “Children with mental or emotional disorders are prone to have academic difficulties, and are less likely to succeed if subjected to suspension and expulsion” (Teske, 2011, p. 90). Students with emotional disorders need to feel success and the alternative school setting allows for that type of success due to the smaller class size and the opportunities that may not be available in the public-school setting. A Christian alternative school could help even more by adding the element of God into the education. In a study by Koenig (2012), the research

shows that religion and spirituality helped people cope with a wide range of illnesses and stressful situations in 454 separate studies. In other experiments performed in the same case study, 79% of the participants found positive relationships because of religion and spirituality present in the situations (Koenig, 2012). This information encourages the use of Christian mentors and teachers at Christian alternative schools.

Private Schools

There are various types of private education available to families in the United States. Charter schools, private schools, parochial schools, and various types of homeschools have originated to give families a choice in the education of their children. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017), in 2013/2014, there were over 33,740 private schools in the United States and over five million students attended these non-public schools.

Mission of Christian Schools

It is the mission of most Christian schools to teach academics through a biblical perspective and help the child not only grow in knowledge (ACSI, n.d.) but also a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. This case study is on an ACSI-approved school which follows the guidelines of being an evangelistic and discipleship school.

An evangelistic/discipleship school is one that focuses on sharing the gospel and leading people to Christ. According to Hewitt (2014), “at their core, evangelism and discipleship are about building genuine relationships with people who are seeking fullness of life that is mirrored in the life of Jesus (p. 201). Christian school teachers should be working with the students, and the discipleship that is associated with this process should be for the purpose of sharing knowledge with the students which will help them have a closer walk with the Lord (Evans, 2017). Evans (2017) says that a teacher’s goal when disciplining a child should be for the

student to mold and form his or her life more like Christ than that of the teacher or church leaders. The process of disciplining students has to come from a Christian educator with a biblical worldview.

School is a major part of every child's life, "Students spend approximately 17,000 hours in an educational context before graduation" (Evans, 2017, p. 42). Since teachers spend so much time with their students, it is important for the teacher to develop a discipleship culture in the classroom by sharing information through a biblical perspective in daily lessons.

ECCAS is considered an evangelistic school because it allows students from many religions to attend and it shares the gospel with each child, thus witnessing for the Lord. ECCAS is also considered a discipleship school because it works with the students on bringing their relationship closer to the Lord.

ACSI accredited schools hire teachers who are born-again believers who love God and His word. Teachers at these schools are trained to teach and nurture the children not only academically but spiritually as well. According to ECCAS (2017), it "provides opportunities which allow students to realize their God-given potential and to live lives that glorify God in the spiritual, academic, social, physical and vocational realms."

Challenges Experienced by Christian Schools

Most Christian schools do not receive federal funding, so tuition, grants from charitable organizations, fundraisers, religious organizations, and donations are the manner in which they are financially supported. Most Christian schools do not offer as many programs or extra-curricular sports and activities because of a lack of funds or building capabilities/restrictions. Studies have been done on Christian schools to find their vulnerable areas. According to a

review of current research by Cooling (2014), one of the biggest issues is the diversity that can be seen in the American society not only of color but learning needs, religious, and moral values.

Another challenge for private schools is funding for special education programs. Because these schools do not get federal funding, special services are paid for by other means, which usually falls on the shoulders of the parents of the students involved. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal government is in charge or governs special education programs in the public-school sector (Buck, 2012). IDEA articulates, “States must ensure that free appropriate public education is available to all children with disabilities” (Buck, 2012, p. 3). This same plan calls for an IEP for each student, and all of this is paid for by the federal government. Some private and parochial schools provide this service for a cost to help cover the salary of the special education teacher in their school.

Cooling (2014) discussed the issues of civic involvement and how educators need to work hard to prepare students for the world around them. Of course, there are always other situations that can be considered; however, finances and diversity are two big ones. Private schools are not federally funded and thus the cost usually prevents many from attending. Diversity is also a major circumstance in private schools, not only because of the demographics of the area, but the economic conditions of the ethnic groups based on jobs and salaries in the area.

Summary

There are many ways to address problem behaviors in school. Many schools adopted the zero tolerance policy because it is easy to implement since the ESEA of 1965 legislation has given mandates for certain behaviors (Mongan & Walker, 2012). There does seem to be questions concerning the use of zero tolerance for minor school infractions and simply a

breaking of the rules in classrooms. Many schools using zero tolerance as a behavioral policy find themselves giving an abundance of both ISS and OSS. Allman and Slate (2011) suggested, “Disciplinary actions reported by school administrators included the assignment of expulsion, placement in a disciplinary alternative education program, and extended out of school suspension” (p. 3). There is a big demand for alternative schools for many reasons, such as behavioral situations and students with special needs.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) bioecological systems theory stresses that a child’s development is set in motion by the interaction of the factors in the child’s mesosystem. The system which includes school, religion, and family would suffer implications if a child is removed from a school setting. Occasionally, students change school, but to be removed from school completely as a type of punishment could be devastating to the child’s development. In order for a child to have proper development, all areas must be accounted (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory implies that students should not be removed from a school atmosphere. Removing a student from school leaves a void in that child’s life that will be filled with something. ECCAS not only gives the child a place to go, but gives them a good Christian mentor to look to for insight and leadership. In order for a person to become a fully functioning adult that will make a positive mark on society, there must be positive role models and a safe environment in the child’s life.

This intrinsic case study on ECCAS explored many areas to see if there are lessons that can be learned from ECCAS. It is imperative to find positive alternatives for zero tolerance behavior policies. The future of the youth depends on what society does with them when problems occur. There is a lot of information on the many alternative schools available; however, this study explored deeply into one particular school system that is doing something

different and this fills the gap in literature on Christian alternative schools. This case study not only gives needed information on how one school community is addressing this need, but gives direction and hope to students and their parents who are desperately seeking a program before they make a decision to quit education altogether.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This intrinsic case study investigated East Coast Christian Alternative School (ECCAS) and its impact on the lives of students who have attended. This case study is composed of five nested cases composed of five graduates and their parents, past teachers and administrators or others who may have been a part of their support teams. There are many alternative schools; however, there is a gap in the literature concerning Christian alternative schools. Many of the students who attend the ECCAS program, a distinctly Christian alternative school, go on to graduate. The methods used for restoration of the student and the values taught need to be shared so more students might experience restoration, and so other schools may learn from this program in their efforts to develop their own alternative programs for students whose needs are not met in the general education classroom.

Chapter Three contains a description of the design of the study. Next, the research questions are shared. The setting and rationale are defined; the site, the method of selection for each participant, and the procedures are presented in detail. Next the researcher's role is clearly explained. Data collection and types of data are explained. The instruments used to collect the data are introduced and explained. Each research sub-question will be stated. The questionnaire describing interest in the case study, the various documents that are pertinent to the study, and the method of document analysis will follow. Data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations with a final summary of the chapter will conclude Chapter Three.

Design

The qualitative method of research was selected as the approach for this study because the information that was sought was not just numbers, but a situation that needed observation,

and to study and “research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” or situation (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). This study seeks to study a specific school and how it is affecting the lives of the students who attend there. The reason for studying and understanding this unique program from the perspective of the student, parents, and teachers, is that it could be beneficial to other students, administrators, and communities in the future when addressing the quality of life for students after attending the program.

The reason for selecting a case study as the approach was because this was a specific place. Creswell (2013) says, “a case... can be bounded or described within certain parameters, such as a specific place and time” (p. 98). This case studied the lives of five participants who attended ECCAS and went on to graduate. It consisted of five nested cases (or individual cases within the case itself). Each of the five nested cases included a graduate from ECCAS, his or her parent(s), teachers, pastors, and administrators. Different types of data collection were used including interviews, focus groups, and document collection. Case studies identify themes, issues or specific situations. This information was used to find specific meaning and information about this unique school.

This is an intrinsic case study because the students cannot be separated from the program (Creswell, 2013). The reason for studying the students lies in the result of how the program affected them. It is a bounded intrinsic case study because not only are the results based on the students, but how they were affected by ECCAS and the time they spent at the school. Intrinsic studies tend to look at an unusual situation and report on it (Creswell, 2013). This intrinsic case study looked at the effects that the unique Christian alternative school had on the lives of the students who attended. ECCAS is the only school of its kind.

The approach of this single case study researched five nested cases containing five students that graduated after having attended ECCAS in one bounded case. In each case, the student, parent, teacher, pastor, and administrator were interviewed. Categorical aggregation was used to make naturalistic generalizations from the group for each of the five cases (Stake, 2005). This information helped me discern if ECCAS affected students' completion of high school. The information from this intrinsic case study assisted in exploring the program and how to help students (Stake, 1995).

This qualitative case study explored the experiences and narratives of the participants which makes the study unique and qualitative. This study is about the participants' lives rather than the number of participants. A case study is a type of research that is used to delve into a specific phenomenon that is happening at a specific location with a group of people at that location (Yin, 2009). Yin says (2009), "case study research involves the study of a case with a real-life, contemporary context or setting" (p. 97). Stake (2005) explains, "case study research is not a methodology, but a choice of what is to be studied (i.e., a case within a bounded system, bounded by time and place)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). A certain phenomenon affecting ECCAS and the lives of the students was the basis for this bounded study (Stake, 2005).

Research Questions

Central Question: What are the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States?

RQ1: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student's academic development and post-school outcomes?

RQ2: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student's social/behavioral development and post school outcomes?

RQ3: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student's spiritual development and post school outcomes?

Setting

The site for this case study was East Coast Christian Alternative School (pseudonym). The school is located in a city of approximately 80,000 people with many other schools and colleges in the area. ECCAS is located geographically near mountains and close to the East coast of the United States. The alternative school is a division of a large Christian school, which began in 1967 and has an average enrollment of approximately 2,000 students. The Christian school offers special education services and has a good working relationship with a nearby college and the educational program at that institution. The alternative school division opened in 2011. The alternative school was opened to accommodate students from the Christian school who were expelled for various reasons. The administration wanted to continue to reach out to these students and not just abandon them. Since its conception, ECCAS has reached out to students that have been expelled or suspended from other schools, both private and public.

ECCAS is located on the same campus and shares the building with a large Christian school. Students at the alternative Christian school take their classes online through a specific Online program mandated by ECCAS which must be done on the alternative school campus in specified classrooms with the assigned teacher. Keeping the students on campus helps keep them involved and interacting with others. Teachers from the Christian school act as mentors, and some of the teachers from the Christian school go to the alternative school classroom during their planning period to tutor the students. Since math is an upper level and higher level thinking class, the math teachers from the adjoining Christian school go to the alternative school classrooms to tutor the students in this subject.

ECCAS has a student body ratio of three boys to one girl with varied ethnicities. The school population varies during the school year. Students enter and leave at the beginning and end of semesters. Some students stay for more than one semester and others for more than one year. During any given year the size of the student body can be between eight to fifteen students at one time. It is common for students to mainstream back into the general Christian school after one semester of alternative school, which means they could graduate from the Christian school if they choose or the alternative school. ECCAS averages approximately six or more students graduating each year.

ECCAS was chosen for the case study due to the uniqueness of being a Christian alternative school. According to information from the ACSI (n.d.), ECCAS is the only Christian alternative school of its kind which accommodates students who have been suspended or expelled from other schools for behavioral or academic reasons. It was also convenient for me to study due to the close proximity of my job.

Pseudonyms are used for the individuals to respect their privacy. The superintendent supervises both the alternative and traditional Christian school. The principal, Mr. Jones (pseudonym), is the principal over the Christian high school and the alternative Christian school. The alternative Christian school division, ECCAS, has one person that is over all students and acts as a liaison between the students and the administrators.

Participants

The participants were selected by first sending out a questionnaire (see Appendix E) asking for students to volunteer to participate in the study. Next, there was a purposeful sampling based on the criteria that the students had attended ECCAS and had gone on to graduate from high school (Creswell, 2013). Since there were more male students attending

ECCAS, there were three boys and two girls selected for the case study (see Appendix K). Minors were excluded from this case study, and all participants were over the age of 18. Since ECCAS has only been in existence for seven years, all participants will have graduated within the last five years. After finding interest in the study, I sent out an informed consent form (see Appendix C); all of this followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A).

Parents of the students were invited to participate in the study as well (see Appendix D), so informed consent from both the student and the parents was needed. After the students were selected and notified, the parents of these students were also contacted. Teachers who had worked at the Christian alternative school were invited to participate in the study, as well as the school pastor, and head teachers or liaisons from the alternative school. The principal and superintendent had been consistent for all five years and both participated in this case study. There were eighteen participants in this intrinsic case study, with approximately three to five per nested case, discussing the lessons learned for the five student participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Procedures

First, site approval was obtained from the superintendent of the Christian alternative school. Next, I secured IRB approval for this case study (Creswell, 2013; see Appendix A) before beginning data collection. Consent forms were sent to all students who participated in this study (Creswell, 2013; see Appendix C and Appendix D). Once the consent forms were received, the case study continued. Questionnaires were sent to solicit participants and find a purposeful sampling (see Appendix E). All participants were high school graduates over the age of 18, hence no need for assent forms. Students, parents, teachers, the pastor, and administrators

signed the informed consent form. No case study information was gathered until the signed informed consent was received.

Students, parents, school pastor, teachers, and administrators were interviewed using open-ended questions in both structured and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013). Since I composed most of my questions, I got an expert in the field of interviewing to review and pilot those questions with a sample group outside of my study sample prior to IRB approval.

Josh Hooks, a Special Investigator retained by the National Background Investigations Bureau, piloted my questions with a group of post high school anonymous individuals. The questions proved to be adequate for attaining the information needed for this case study. The questions were then used later for the study with the students, parents, teachers, administrators, the pastor, superintendent, and the founder of the alternative school (see Appendices F, G, H, and I).

Following my interviews with the students, I had a focus group with them. Documents of student attendance, graduation, and any other information deemed pertinent to the study was collected (Creswell, 2013).

All information was synthesized and coded for themes or patterns that were recognized. The study documents valuable lessons that emerged from the intrinsic case study of ECCAS (Yin, 2009).

The Researcher's Role

My job as the human instrument in this study was to collect multiple forms of data, analyze and represent the information in a useful way, then disseminate the information in a way that will help others (Creswell, 2013). With a focus on qualitative research to frame this study, the goal was to get the most helpful information. I wrote this study in a verisimilitude style

which is characterized by showing a realistic picture, to help the reader really experience the feelings and attitudes of the participants (Creswell, 2013). As an educator, it is important to seek the best practices to help students in all situations.

My relationship to one of the participants was employee to employer. The superintendent is my superintendent as well. I work for a different division of the Christian school and it is separate from ECCAS. The students participating in this study and I had no interactions, nor did I exercise a supervisory role over them or any teachers who taught them.

My interest in this subject stems from my desire to help children. I have been an educator for over thirty years and have six biological children and two step-children. I have worked with children not only as an educator but also as a coach and volunteer. After witnessing children who have lost their way, hopefully this study will enlighten more schools to model restoration in the Christian educational system.

Data Collection

The data collection for the unique program in the case study for ECCAS was gathered as follows. Questionnaires were sent to find interest in the study. After IRB approval and informed consent forms were obtained, interviews began with the selected participants, their parents, teachers, and administrators. That information was transcribed and triangulated for themes and codes. Next, questions were presented to a focus group, documents were collected and securely stored for protection, and an audit trail was established (see Appendix N).

Questionnaires

Questionnaires (see Appendix E) were sent by the researcher to all students who attended ECCAS and graduated. This was important to find a population of people who could be

participants for the case study (National Science Foundation, 2002). The basic questions allowed interest to emerge.

Question 1: Did you ever attend East Coast Christian Alternative School? Yes or No

Question 2: How long were you a student at ECCAS? A. Less than one semester

B. One semester

C. More than one semester

Question 3: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement.

My experience at East Coast Christian Alternative School made a difference in my life.

Do you: A. strongly agree, B. somewhat agree, C. neither agree nor disagree, D. somewhat disagree, or E. strongly disagree (Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, 2016)

Question 4: Would you be willing to participate in a case study pertaining to ECCAS?

Yes or No

If you answered yes to the above question, please provide your name and contact information. Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

The purpose of the questions was to establish that the individual had attended ECCAS and could possibly be a participant in the case study. The questions also established the amount of time spent at ECCAS. Question number three helped determine if the individual had any particular feelings about the school. There was no bias in choosing participants based on their responses; all responses were included in the study regardless of their nature. Question number four determined if the individual was willing to be a participant in the case study. All of these questions helped me better understand the program at ECCAS. The questions also helped me see the uniqueness of the program and thus substantiate the need for this case study (Stake, 1995).

Interviews

In case study research, candid interviews are used to gather information that has never been shared in any other form of research collection. The responsive interviewing model (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) was selected because it allowed for some flexibility. Students were able to elaborate on their answers. The superintendent and administrator interviews were conducted in a conference room at the Christian school. Teacher interviews were conducted in their classrooms which were scheduled for the end of a school day. The Christian alternative school teacher's interview was conducted in a conference room at a local university. Parent and student interviews were conducted at a local bookstore or library, whichever was closer and acceptable for the participant.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed using an iPad and the *Rev* app. Member checking was used to insure credibility of the transcription (Creswell, 2013). The transcriptions were made available to all of the interviewees to complete the member checks. (see Appendix L).

Standard open-ended interview questions for students (see Appendix F). All student participants were asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your high school experience. (Give as much detail as possible.)
2. If you could change your high school experience, what changes would you make?
3. What is a highlight of your high school experience? Is there something that will stand out; something that you will always remember?
4. How would you like to be remembered?
5. What have been the biggest failures or frustrations in your life?

6. Tell me about a person or event that has markedly changed you. Questions 1-6 (Trustees of Dartmouth College, 2016) (see Appendix P).
7. What was school like at East Coast Christian Alternative School, detail a day of school sharing specifics about academics?
8. Explain how mentors were used and your ideas about their effectiveness or ineffectiveness for you.
9. How did ECCAS, if at all prepare you for:
 - A. college
 - B. employment
 - C. how you relate to others/including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
10. Do you think you would have still graduated even if you didn't attend ECCAS?

The purpose of questions one and two was to get information about the school itself.

Questions three through five were more personal and gave me insight into the student's life and how they felt that they fit into the school and social life (Bandura, 2001). Question seven and eight helped me understand the daily routine and what school was like for the student at ECCAS. Questions nine and ten helped me understand if the student felt success because they spent time at ECCAS, or if it was just something they had to do which refers to Bandura's (2001) self-efficacy.

Standard open-ended interview questions for parents (see Appendix G). All parents of participants were asked these questions:

1. What is your overall evaluation of your child's high school experience?
2. Why did you send your child to East Coast Christian Alternative School?

3. Why was your child sent to an alternative school?
4. How did ECCAS help your child?
5. What person or event helped your child while attending ECCAS?
6. Explain the feedback you got from your child while they were attending ECCAS.
7. What were some things you liked and didn't like about ECCAS?
8. Please explain the impact, positive or negative, that ECCAS has on your child.
9. How did ECCAS, if at all prepare your child for:
 - A. college
 - B. employment
 - C. how they relate to others/including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
10. Explain how the mentoring program helped or didn't help your child.

Questions one through five helped the parent explain why they sent their child to ECCAS. This information is the basis for using Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory of Learning. Questions six through ten allowed participants to share feedback not only on the school but how it influences lives. This is a good example of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, in that not only can the parents and others see the evidence of the participant's life, but it also affects the people in the participant's various systems. The parents were more open and candid since this was a private interview rather than a focus group (Creswell, 2013). All interviews were recorded and transcribed later. Parents were allowed to member check for credibility (Creswell, 2013).

Standard open-ended interview questions for the school pastor, teachers and administrators (see Appendix H). All teachers and administrators were asked the following questions:

1. What is your overall feeling or attitude about the program at ECCAS?
2. What are the most common reasons for students enrolling at ECCAS?
3. How does ECCAS help the students and what makes it different from other alternative schools?
4. What type of special programs are offered to help students attending ECCAS?
5. What are some things you would like to add or change about ECCAS?
6. How is the mentor program beneficial to the alternative school students?
7. How has ECCAS influenced the life of the students:
 - A. toward higher education
 - B. for future employment
 - C. how they relate to others/ including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
8. Is there a specific number of times a student is allowed to return to ECCAS and how often do students return?
9. Can you share anything that you remember specifically about (list of the five students in the survey)?

Specific questions for founder of the alternative school (see Appendix I). The administrator that founded the alternative school was asked these questions:

1. Why did you begin the alternative school?
2. What are the challenges of the alternative school?

3. What are some of the success of the alternative school?
4. What are some recommendations you could make for other founders of Christian alternative schools?

In questions one through five, I tried to get general information about the school and how it is specifically different from other alternative schools (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This information clarified why this alternative school is so different from the thousands of other alternative schools. Questions six through nine dealt with the students and their lives or their outer layers of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. In the ecological systems theory, it is important to understand that there is a ripple effect that starts close to the individual and radiates out to all other levels of a child's life and environment. This information helped add to the in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). All of these questions together made this an intrinsic case study because not only did I look at the program, but the students it affected (Stake, 1995).

Focus group open-ended questions for students (see Appendix J). The following questions were asked to a focus group of students at a meeting in a nearby library meeting room:

1. What is your overall evaluation of how the program at ECCAS is helping students?
2. What are the most common reasons for students enrolling at ECCAS?
3. How does ECCAS help the students and what makes it different from other alternative schools?
4. What are some things you would like to add or change about ECCAS?
5. Explain how the mentor program helps students
6. Discuss some social benefits of attending ECCAS.

In questions one and two, I tried to get the students to open up about the school and the purpose for attending ECCAS. In questions three through six, I looked for Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory to present itself. I tried to see if the students looked forward to coming to school not only for the education but to have a social aspect of their life fulfilled. Question six looked for self-efficacy information (Bandura, 2001). I wanted to know if there was really something different about ECCAS that set it apart from other schools (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I encouraged all members to participate while keeping the discussion on topic. I watched for synergism, snowballing and stimulation within the group (Creswell, 2013).

Documents

School records (attendance, grade point average, and graduation dates) including transcripts of the five students were collected from parents and ECCAS as primary sources to get background information on the participants (Creswell, 2013). I converted the documents to electronic images to be stored and secured on my computer. The gathering of the documents and other information was securely stored and helped form an audit trail (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

The questionnaire (see Appendix E) was used to find a criterion sample (Creswell, 2013). The information was coded looking for themes. An analysis was done of five separate nested cases. Each student participant and their parents along with the teachers and administrators were looked at as a nested case within the overall case. Each case was analyzed separately and then the information was synthesized to identify cross case themes. Next, I generated naturalistic generalizations (Yin, 2009).

Within Nested Case Analysis

The information from the interviews was transcribed using the Rev app on an iPad, and then rechecked for precise word articulation. The first step was to code the information. Next, the information was put into categories using “categorical aggregation to establish themes and patterns” (Creswell, 2013, p. 190). Three forms of data (questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups) were used to make the categorical aggregation or themes for each nested case (Stake, 1995). The focus group gave additional information to help with the themes or patterns for each participant (Creswell, 2013). The information from the individual nested themes was then interpreted and used to compile a larger theme for the data using Stake’s (1995) worksheets (see Appendix N).

Across Nested Case Analysis

Next, the individual nested cases were assessed using categorical aggregation to establish themes and patterns across the nested cases (Stake, 1995). Then, the information from the various documents was considered to complete the information needed to finalize the naturalistic generalizations of the five individual nested cases in order to present an in-depth picture of the ECCAS case study so people can learn from this intrinsic case study either for themselves or to apply it to a population of cases (Creswell, 2013). These naturalistic generalizations will help readers gain insight into the case study by reflecting on the participants’ input. Stake’s (2006) worksheets (see Appendix N) for systematic analysis across cases were used to help compile the information across the nested cases.

Trustworthiness

This section deals with the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each area independently is of utmost importance when conducting a qualitative research study. These are not only important to the participants but are

an indication of a person's reliability in areas that are important to others. I work for a separate division of the Christian school and used member checks, researcher reflexivity, and an external auditor to make sure that this research was as unbiased as possible.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I used a prolonged engagement of six months to a year, to make sure there were no distortions introduced by the researcher in the information that might cause a credibility issue. I then used triangulation of information from each interview and other forms of data to help formulate the lessons learned (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Triangulation was used to corroborate information collected which increased the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also used peer debriefing as an external check that helped keep the research heading in an honest and straight direction and also used member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Two faculty members from a local K-12 school helped with the peer debriefing of this case study. They helped by asking probing questions concerning this research and the process. According to Stake (1995), in member checks, I took the information I gathered from the participants back to them in order to assure that I had made the correct interpretations, and conclusions. The participants were able to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account, which kept the participant in an active role during the case study (Stake, 1995).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability deals with consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability is based on solid information such as member checks and corroboration between information and participants along with the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I made use of an audit trail to help establish confirmability. The audit trail shows how and where all the data is collected. Audit trails (see Appendix O) kept track of all documents, interviews, and any other data that

was used in an orderly manner so that each part could be replicated if needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All documents and a sample interview was placed in the appendices for use by the auditor. The use of an auditor is suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), “the auditor examines whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). The auditor needs to be a neutral person, having nothing to do with the case while entertaining experience or expertise with the topic or qualitative analysis. I used a professor from a local university who has dealt with qualitative research to be the auditor for this case study. The auditor gave suggestions and insights that helped me follow the data trail.

Transferability

Transferability means the reader can transfer the information and findings to other locations if the two settings or participants have shared characteristics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress the importance of transferability in qualitative research so that lessons learned may be transferable. This is enhanced through the use of rich, thick descriptions. According to Creswell (2013), rich and thick descriptions “[allow] readers to make decisions regarding transferability” (p. 252). Using rich, thick descriptions and transferability means the reader can transfer the information and findings to other locations if the two settings have shared characteristics, which will give insight and the ability to apply the lessons learned. Rich and thick descriptions contain a wealth of interconnected details. As much as possible given the available population, I made sure there was maximum variation in gender and ethnicity to increase transferability.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations that I took into account included IRB approval. I did not collect data until I had obtained IRB and site approval as well as signed informed consent forms.

Pseudonyms were used for the site and all participants to ensure confidentiality. All information used in this study was kept on a password protected computer or in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of five years then put through a shredder. I had no supervisory or authority relationships with any of the participants. However, I work at the sister school and tried to keep the natural biases out of this study as much as possible. There were no other conflicts of interest. I also made sure that relationships were not jeopardized or injured by sharing research information.

Summary

This chapter discussed the actual workings of the study. It discussed the forms of data and information that were collected. The procedures and analysis were discussed in detail and many philosophers were cited. I also discussed methods of establishing trustworthiness and the ethical considerations that needed to be made to perform this qualitative case study.

It is my hope that through the information acquired and synthesized that I discover lessons learned and naturalistic generalizations that will help future schools and students. It is only through studying lessons learned and then taking that information and sharing it that we can make the future a brighter and better place for all students.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to describe the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States. The central question for this study was what are the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States? What role does attending ECCAS play in a student's academic, spiritual, and social/behavioral development and post-school outcomes were each a sub-question for this research. The nested studies for five students were conducted through interviews, a focus group and documents. Several themes were identified. The restoration of students was the main theme that overshadowed the research. Other themes dealt with the students' spiritual awakening, academic success, and social development. Five student participants were interviewed, a focus group of participants was assembled and transcripts were collected from the schools' students attended to help form the conclusions for this study.

The two theories pertaining to adolescents and this study were supported in the findings presented in this case study. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory pertains to the child's biology interacting with their environment that affects their development. The micro and mesosystem layers dealing with family, school, and environmental surroundings help to support the conclusions (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory is the other theory used to substantiate the findings. A student's biological events, behavioral patterns and environmental events all factor into the findings of this research (Bandura, 1999, p. 21). This study also delved into Bandura's (1989) self-efficacy theory in that social behavior comes from our environment and people we imitate which is evident in this study based on the findings

presented. The participants shared the idea that being in the classroom at ECCAS made a difference.

ECCAS is a private school, so it does not get any federal funding. The salaries of the instructors are paid by the tuition from the students who attend. Since it is part of a sister school, the building is provided, thus keeping the cost down while helping students. The superintendent, Dr. Smith (pseudonym), shared that the teacher's salary is covered by the tuition from the students by saying, "It completely validates itself."

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of the students for the five nested cases: Ava, Jacob, Katie, Alexander, and Jerimiah with their parents, teachers, principals, school pastor, and the founder and superintendent of the school. The focus group included two of these students and one additional student named Ethan (see Appendix K).

Ethan

Ethan is an enthusiastic college student who owns his own business. He is a young entrepreneur with high expectations for his business. He spent one semester in the alternative school. Ethan was eager to return to the regular classroom and found that he was able to make real friends and did not have to be the class clown to get attention. He became a leader instead of a follower.

Ava

Ava is a talented young lady that works at a local job and is described by her mother as a very compassionate, loving person. She is attending a community college and is working toward enriching her life through attaining a college degree. Her hope is that she can help others by

participating in this study. Ava had to leave her school due to problems with other students. She chose to finish her education at the alternative school and she graduated from ECCAS.

Jacob

Jacob is a hard-working student at a local college. His father described him as always being positive and a nice person. He had to leave his school due to behavior problems. Jacob graduated from a local school after spending one semester in the ECCAS and is now an athlete in college. While attending college, Jacob is working a part-time job to help support himself. He is one of four sons.

Katie

Katie is a sweet sensitive young woman. She is very soft spoken. Katie had to leave her school due to problems with other students and illegal substances. Katie spent a couple months in the ECCAS. She chose to stay and graduate from ECCAS. She has plans for her life and a desire to attain goals. Katie is working while attending college and has a high grade point average (GPA). Her mother said she is a genuine person who is focused and seeks good in others.

Alexander

Alexander is a quiet well-spoken individual. He attended the alternative school for a semester and then finished his high school education online at home due to health issues. He is attending a small community college and continuing his post high school education. Alexander has set short and long-range goals for his life, and he is on track for graduating from college. His mother said that Alexander was trying to find himself while he was attending ECCAS.

Jerimiah

Jerimiah is a tall athletic young man. He had a hard time with other students in public school and was looking for an educational institution that would accept him. He was tall for his age and the students teased him for his height and age. Because of this, he had some disagreements and altercations with other students. He was not allowed to stay in the public-school system. He spent one year at ECCAS. Then, he transferred to a Christian school. When Jerimiah was a young boy, he loved school and could not wait to get there. His early high school years proved to be a bad experience for Jerimiah. By tenth grade, he was looking for a school that would accept him and ECCAS was the only one that said yes. He spent one year at the alternative school and during that time, he accepted Christ as his Savior. Jerimiah's life turned around and he became a great student that not only loved school again but loved the Lord. Jerimiah's mother said ECCAS brought Jerimiah through and if it had not been for this school, she might not have had a son.

Superintendent, Dr. Smith

Dr. Smith is a highly educated man with a passion for children. He sees the good in a child and tries to help parents and teachers work with each child to reach their goals and potential. Dr. Smith oversees two schools, their faculty, staff, and the students. He is a hands-on type of administrator. Dr. Smith talks to students to get the heartbeat of where they are and what needs to be accomplished to help each student at his schools. He not only watches out for the students, he also has his hand on the pulse of the school and its finances. He is a family man who sees the value of the family unit.

Founder/Principal, Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones serves the school in the capacity of high school principal and it was his vision to start ECCAS. His passion for students and their education led him to study other alternative

schools and come up with a better choice for teenagers. He is a compassionate principal and has a loving wife and children that are willing to share their time with him to help others. Mr. Jones works closely with the students at the alternative school; he serves as an administrator for the sister school. He puts in many hours at the schools helping students and listening to the students' and parents' concerns. He continues to take classes and better his educational knowledge and career.

Pastor Jamal

Pastor Jamal is a compassionate, energetic man with a smile on his face and the Lord in his heart. He always listens when students need to share. He shows kindness and grace when no one else seems to care. Pastor Jamal is always available. He is truly working with students to restore their self-worth and self-confidence. Pastor Jamal keeps his word and is a prayer warrior for anyone that wants to open up to him. He shares the Word of the Lord and shows the students how to apply it in their life. He is not just there for school, he becomes a true life-long friend and confidant.

Principal, Mr. Harris

Mr. Harris is a kind man with a family of his own. He has taught in the classroom, coached, and is a principal at the sister school. Mr. Harris looks at the children in ECCAS and tries to find ways to help them help themselves. He visits the students several times a week to keep up with where they are emotionally and behaviorally. Mr. Harris serves not only as a principal but also counsels some of the students in the alternative school. He works with the teacher/facilitator to help her better serve the students at ECCAS.

Teacher/Facilitator, Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson is a kind, sweet, quiet, soft-spoken family oriented woman. Her area of expertise is math, and she is very knowledgeable about computers. Her ingenuity and knowledge helped her in the classroom, but it was her compassion that the students remembered most. Many students shared stories about her kindness and grace that she showed to the students in the alternative school. She had a way of making them feel special even though they were in an alternative school for various reasons.

Teacher/Facilitator, Mrs. Miller

Mrs. Miller was a no-nonsense kind of person that cared for each child as if they were her own. Students shared how she was firm, but caring. She had expectations, but understood mistakes. She pressed the students to be better and to find that inner-person that they could be proud of. Mrs. Miller is a Godly woman. Her husband became part of the students' lives as well as the rest of her family. She was always willing to go the extra mile to help the students.

Results

The results of this case study show that ECCAS makes a difference in the lives of students who attend, using Christ as the center of the program. All participants in this study had a positive outcome after attending a Christian alternative school. They have all gone on to higher education. Each of the participants shared that they contributed their success to the values and education they received at ECCAS.

Theme Development

The study began by testing the interview questions on a local university instructor. Next, students, parents, teachers, principals, the pastor and superintendent of ECCAS were interviewed (see Appendix C) as small nested cases. Each of the individual nested case interviews were analyzed and many of the same codes were found by use of in vivo codes (Creswell, 2013, p.

185). Words like restoration, reconciliation, and successful all deal with life and things that people go through. Superintendent Dr. Smith (personal communication, October 10, 2017) said, “It’s a program of reconciliation, it is much more about restoration.” Principal Harris (personal communication, October 11, 2017) shared, “Students have to fall in line if they want to be successful.” Principal Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) stated, “It takes them out of a stressful situation and puts them into a situation where they can be successful.”

Other words such as responsibility, preparation, and self-discipline deal with the personal growth people go through. Ethan (personal communication, September 11, 2017) said, “It gave me more responsibility on my own.” Jacob (personal communication, September 17, 2017), another student, shared, “I think alternative school prepared me for college.” Mrs. Johnson (personal communication, October 4, 2017), a teacher at the school stated, “It taught them self-discipline and being able to follow through on a plan and carry it out.”

Other code words such as grace, mercy, humility, spiritual growth, and self-esteem dealt with the students’ self-worth or spirituality. One of the teachers, Mrs. Miller (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, “We tried to show grace and mercy.” Katie’s mother (personal communication, September 27, 2017) stated, “I think Katie looking back and being able to see the grace and the kindness that she got had more of a spiritual impact.” Superintendent Dr. Smith (personal communication, October 10, 2017) shared, “It takes a lot of humility to say, I need something different.” The principal, Mr. Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) said, “The spiritual growth is a major factor.” All of these statements provided from the individual nested cases led to the codes.

After the triangulation of the nested cases, they were synthesized into one case study. Emergent codes developed as the information came together. From the codes, subthemes

developed using interviews, the focus group, and documentation obtained from the alternative school. Subthemes were synthesized into three basic themes (see Appendix E): life changing factors, personal growth, and the spiritual aspect of life

Some of the students found that they thrived in the alternative school and it helped their grades improve. Ava (personal communication, September 11, 2017) indicated, “I struggled a lot with my grades in high school, and being in alternative school, I graduated with perfect grades. The teachers helped me a lot in my personal life and in my academic life.” ECCAS helped the students succeed in many areas of their life. Principal Harris (personal communication, October 11, 2017) shared, “We are helping them grow in their character.” Principal Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) went a step farther, “We are helping them see small successes which leads to big successes.” Jerimiah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) shared, “It’s just a life changing experience.” Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication, September 13, 2017) was so happy with the experience that she stated, “The alternative school was the best thing that could have happened for us.” One of the teachers interviewed, Mrs. Johnson (personal communication, October 4, 2017) said, “I think there’s definitely been kids who have made complete turnarounds.” One more comment that shows how the faculty and staff help the students as far as changing their lives was offered by Principal Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017), “We focus on the restoration part of it. We don’t focus on what’s behind you. We focus on what’s ahead.”

The theme of personal growth is shown by some of the statements not only from the students and parents, but the faculty and staff as well. Alexander’s mother said that her son was trying to find himself when he entered ECCAS. Alexander shared that he now has direction and knows what he wants to do with his life. Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication,

September 13, 2017) shared, “Jerimiah was dealing with inner feelings of worthlessness. The alternative school brought him through all of this.” Looking at this theme through the eyes of a teacher, Mrs. Johnson (personal communication, October 4, 2017), a teacher participating in this study at ECCAS, shared, “One of the female student participants, Ava, seemed like she was a very hardened kind of person, but I felt like as the year progressed, her heart melted. That makes you cry.” The principal also shared information that goes with this theme, “We (faculty and staff at ECCAS) have the servant mentality of serving, helping, and moving students from point A to point B” (Harris, personal communication, October 11, 2017). Many of the students seem to know where they are headed and what they want for their future after having attended ECCAS.

Jacob (personal communication, September 17, 2017) shared, “I accepted Christ while attending the alternative school.” This statement provides information that is of a personal nature, yet Jacob was enthusiastic to share his personal growth. Ava’s mother (personal communication, October 21, 2017) stated, “One teacher taught Ava that God is with her and He’ll never leave her, He has her wrapped in His arms.” Ava later confirmed that she was given spiritual leadership through the educators that were over her in the alternative school. Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, “Jerimiah got saved at the end of alternative school, the school introduced Christ to Jerimiah.” The theme of a person’s spiritual aspect of life is evident throughout the study. Principal Harris (personal communication, October 11, 2017) shared, “They’re (students) exposed every week to spiritual truth, Christian truths through a curriculum and they attend chapel.” Students are also required to attend church on Sundays unless they are out of town. The superintendent, Dr. Smith (personal communication, October 10, 2017) stated, “I think the whole journey of the alternative school is

a spiritual journey for the kids. They made a mistake or they have school anxiety, they need compassion, they need love more than anybody.”

The school documentation used for this study were copies of each student’s transcripts. In each nested case, the student’s grades improved when they attended ECCAS. Principal Jones felt the flexibility was a key for the students’ achievements. Principal Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) shared, “We have also been able to extend the school year to help students that are low academically. In the alternative school students are required to maintain a 2.75 GPA.” Each student is treated as an individual with an IEP. The goal of ECCAS is to see their students restored to society in a better state of mind, which will help them see a better future and be more successful.

Research Question Responses

This case study focused on one central question, what are the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States, and three sub questions. The sub questions were:

RQ1: What role does attending ECCAS play in a student’s academic development and post-school outcomes?

RQ2: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student’s social/behavioral development and post school outcomes?

RQ3: What role did attending ECCAS play in the student’s spiritual development and post school outcomes?

The central question, what are the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States, was answered many times by several of the participants in the individual nested cases. Jacob (personal

communication, September 17, 2017) shared that it helped him continue his education: “I am in college right now.” Jerimiah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) was appreciative for the direction that it gave him. He said, “It gave me a good foundation for learning.” Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication, September 13, 2017) went on to share that, “He started at a local college after graduating, and he has signed up for the military reserve.” Ava and her mother were very grateful to the alternative school and its faculty and staff. Ava’s mother (personal communication, October 21, 2017) said, “It brought back her sense of humor, happiness, contentment, and self-worth.” The idea of bettering the student both at the point where they were and for the future was echoed by Katie’s mother (personal communication, September 27, 2017), “Katie is focused, and awesome and it’s just amazing how she’s grown. Katie would not be who she is today had it not been for the alternative school.” Each of these students shared the themes that came from this case study in that ECCAS helped them with life changing factors, personal growth, and the spiritual aspect of their life.

Sub question one, what role does attending ECCAS play in a student’s academic development and post-school outcomes is also answered by the students when you look at the three themes. Jacob (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said that it helped him as he shifted to college life in that he must do many of the same tasks for his college courses that he did at the alternative school: “I pretty much do the same stuff.” Jerimiah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) felt he was really prepared to handle college life after attending ECCAS: “The school really helped to prepare you for college by just working by yourself trying to understand, the knowledge you acquired, and learning to study.” The superintendent Dr. Smith (personal communication, October 10, 2017) shared, “It allows them to graduate from school, and you can’t get to higher education without a high school diploma. For

certain kids, there's no doubt that it is a benefit towards their advancement to higher education.” Principal Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) looks to the future for the students at ECCAS when he states, “The whole goal of the alternative school is to keep the academic progress moving forward.” Each student entering ECCAS is given a personal IEP or contract stating requirements for them to attend ECCAS. The data in the form of transcripts from the school helped to provide evidence that the students did improve academically as a result of attending ECCAS.

Sub Question two, what role did attending ECCAS play in the student's social/behavioral development and post school outcomes, really lends itself to the theme of personal growth. Ava (personal communication, September 11, 2017) shared, “I had people to talk to.” Jacob's father (personal communication, September 22, 2017) liked the idea that it got him away from some of the negative influences: “Jacob was protected from some influences.” The school worked with the students teaching them more than just academics. Katie's mother (personal communication, September 27, 2017) said, “One of the things she learned was that you have to submit to authority, even if you don't like it.” It changed Jerimiah socially in that he shared, “It helped me with relating to others because I was more accepting of others and no matter what the problem was, I was always trying to be there for everyone” (Jerimiah, personal communication, 9/13/17). Many students struggle with this idea. In Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory of behavior, the environment and people in that environment can be very influential and inspiration students' attitudes to move in various directions. Principal Jones took a holistic look at the student and their future when he shared,

I think that some of the character qualities that they receive from the alternative school, is knowing that there is grace and mercy. It builds their self-esteem, their

self-concept and then taking them out of a stressful situation and putting them in a situation where they can be successful, letting them see small successes leads to big successes. I think that is the same way for employment. They start to believe in themselves, and they're working hard and that translates into being a better employee and feeling more confident. (Jones, personal communication, September 22, 2017)

Sub question three, what role did attending ECCAS play in the student's spiritual development and post school outcomes, refers to the themes of life changing factors and the spiritual aspect of life. Ava's mother (personal communication, October 21, 2017) shared how much it actually helped Ava emotionally and spiritually: "It taught her that she has to learn to love herself first and that no matter what, all that she went through, she always knew that God was with her." Jacob's father knew that the help his son got went beyond education when he said, "Jacob's authority outlook before his salvation was nothing but complaining, disrespect, griping and then after alternative school he was more grateful about everything" (Jacob's Father, personal communication, September 22, 2017). Jerimiah's life changed through attending ECCAS, "It opened my heart to God and just to loving others" (Jerimiah, personal communication, September 13, 2017). Before Jerimiah began attending ECCAS his mother said, "Before the alternative school, Jerimiah was depressed, suicidal, and not wanting to go to school" (Jerimiah's Mother, personal communication, September 13, 2017). Jerimiah's life has changed drastically as has many other students that attended ECCAS.

Summary

The themes that emerged through this study, personal growth, life changing factors, and the spiritual aspect of life, clearly provide answers for the central and three sub-questions the

study was based on. Bronfenbrenner (1994) and Bandura's (1995) theories were beneficial in understanding the thought patterns and social effects of the students and their lives.

Parents, teachers, principals, the pastor and other administration also gave insight into the school and its practices as they pertained to this study. Alexander's mother shared the aspect that sets East Coast Christian Alternative School apart from other alternative schools: "It offers Christian support which is different than other alternative schools" (Alexander's Mother, personal communication, October 2, 2017). There are thousands of alternative schools across the United States. ECCAS is the only Christian alternative school. The purpose of this study was to see if the Christian alternative school made a difference in the lives of the students. This study provided information revealing all of the students randomly selected did go on to attend college and are looking at a successful future.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to describe the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States. The five participants were studied as separate nested cases and then the information was synthesized to form this case study. The following sections summarize the findings and discuss how the information answered the research questions. Theoretical, empirical, and practical information shed light on previous literature discussed in the areas of alternative schools and the various theories that are reflected through this case study. There will be discussion on the various implications, delimitations and limitations used in the process of this study. This case study brought new questions to light and there will be recommendations for future research in the area of alternative schools. This chapter concludes with the most important findings and thoughts on Christian alternative schools based on the findings of this case study.

Summary of Findings

As a result of the information collected through the interviews, focus group, and documentation from this case study, ECCAS makes a huge impact on the students who attend. The most important aspect of the difference is the focus on a Christ (Christian) centered education. ECCAS is changing lives by restoring students and helping students to find themselves through Christ.

The central question asks, what are the experiences and post-school outcomes for student who attended a Christian alternative school in the Southeastern United States? One of the participants, Jerimiah, said,

“In all honesty, I probably wouldn’t have graduated if I didn’t attend the alternative school because it’s like getting you ready to just fit in with everyone else. At the alternative school, you’ll find people who are very caring and really want the best for you in this place. It’s like a diamond field. It’s just a life changing experience.” (Jerimiah, personal communication, September 13, 2017)

This student not only went on to graduate and attend college, he is looking forward to serving his country in the military forces after he graduates from college. What an accomplishment.

Sub-question one asks, what role does attending ECCAS play in a student’s academic development and post-school outcomes? Ava, one of the participants shared, “I would have failed academically if I didn’t attend ECCAS” (Ava, personal communication, September 11, 2017). She works part-time and is taking classes at a local college to improve her future.

Alexander’s mom (personal communication, October 3, 2017) said, “The program helps students stay in school.” Alexander is working part-time and attending a local college.

Sub-question two asks, what role did attending ECCAS play in the student’s social/behavioral development and post school outcomes? Ava’s mother (personal communication, October 21, 2017) shared, “Without the alternative school over the last couple of years, she would not have made it. I didn’t want my kids to grow up the way I did.” Ava is a hard-working employee and a compassionate person who strives to do good. Her mother feels the school really turned her around and helped Ava to find the peace that comes through Jesus Christ. Katie’s mother (personal communication, September 27, 2017) said, “The school was amazing. The administration, the teachers, they were kind and loving and gracious. They allowed her to restore herself.” Katie is in her final year at a local college to become a physical education teacher.

Sub-question three asks, what role did attending ECCAS play in the student's spiritual development and post school outcomes? Alexander's mom (personal communication, October 3, 2017) said, "I think the alternative school boosted some of Alexander's spiritual growth." Students must go to church each week as a student at ECCAS and once a week they attend chapel at school. Jacob (personal communication, September 17, 2017) shared, "I accepted Christ while attending the alternative school," and Jerimiah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, "I opened my heart to God and just to loving others." Jerimiah's mother was so excited how it changed her son's life. She said, "The school introduced Christ to Jerimiah, and he got saved at the end of alternative school" (Jerimiah's Mother, personal communication, September 13, 2017). Accepting Christ is a lifetime decision. It goes with you forever.

Theoretical Discussion

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory (1994), the microsystem and mesosystem layers, and Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory with emphasis on self-efficacy were the basic theories used for this case study. These theories were used in understanding how the student relates to his or her environment and effects it has on him or her.

The microsystem and mesosystem of the ecological systems relates to the impact of the family, school, and other environmental surroundings on the student (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The interviews helped to convey the importance of these areas in the students' life. Katie (personal communication, October 1, 2017) shared, "I liked the environment, our teacher was super sweet, I love her." Jerimiah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, "I came from a public school. It wasn't a loving environment like the alternative school. The teacher at the alternative school was firm, but she loved her students." Jerimiah went on to say, "I walked into a loving atmosphere to where people were accepting you and you were being treated like a

family.” Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, “I knew he was in a safe environment and he enjoyed coming to school.” These statements helped to fortify the idea that students felt safe and they seemed to feel secure in their surroundings with the people that were there. Jacob’s father (personal communication, September 22, 2017) said, “The alternative school was a safe haven for Jacob.”

Bandura’s (1989) self-efficacy theory was also one of the main areas where the students ideally were secure. According to this theory, “Unless people believe that they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties” (Bandura, 1999, p. 28). Ava (personal communication, September 11, 2017) shared, “My teacher helped me through every struggle that I went through.” Principal Mr. Jones (personal communication, September 22, 2017) shared, “they start to believe in themselves, and they’re working hard and that translates into being a better employee and feeling more confident.” Katie (personal communication, October 1, 2017) said, “The mentors would tell us, we weren’t bad people, we just made bad mistakes.” Jerimiah’s mother (personal communication, September 13, 2017) said, “When he came to the alternative school, Jerimiah changed. He realized that there is somebody that cares, and that somebody wanted to see him accomplish his goals in life.” ECCAS helped the students begin to feel that they were important again.

Empirical Discussion

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), there were 3.45 million students suspended out-of-school and 130,000 students expelled in the 2011-2012 school year which is the most up-to-date figures available. These students need alternative schools. Most students

that fall into this category find themselves as re-offenders and quite often end up in the school to prison pipeline (Mallett, 2016).

ECCAS works with these students and helps restore them back into school and society. Superintendent Dr. Smith (personal communication, October 10, 2017) said, “When you think of alternative school, you think about students who cannot function in public schools.” These students need something more. Principal Harris said,

There are students who for whatever the reasons need a time away from the regular classroom. Restoration is what the mission is of the alternative school. Our goal is to support the students with whatever they need to get them to a place where they can return to the regular classroom. (Harris, personal communication, October 11, 2017)

These students are not bad; they have just made bad choices. ECCAS uses Christ-centered education to help the students get back on the right track.

This case study showed how ECCAS’s approach to Christ-centered education not only helps but restores students to being healthy positive individuals. This case study on ECCAS, since it is the only Christian alternative school in the US, could help many other educators and administrators in alternative schools who work with students who are expelled or suspended from school.

Implications

This study had a central research question and three sub-questions pertaining to the effectiveness of ECCAS. The focus of the questions was on three particular areas, which included the academic, social/behavioral, and spiritual development and post-school outcome of the students attending ECCAS. Through interviews, focus group, and documentation, these questions were answered.

There are both theoretical and empirical implications of this study. The theoretical implications deal with the personal outcome of each participant, and the empirical implications discuss the fact that there is no literature on a true Christian alternative school and the students that attend. This study shows both theoretically and empirically the difference ECCAS has on its students.

Theoretical Implications

The research presented provides theoretical proof that attending ECCAS made a difference in the lives of the students that attended this school. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory said that the participant's home environment, school, and community made a difference, and after interviewing the parents and people surrounding them, it was apparent that the environment both at school and home, played a major role in the participant's life. Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory on self-efficacy was also important in this study in how the participants felt about themselves before and after their time at ECCAS and the impact the school had on them. More than half of the students felt that it changed their life. Students found a way to fit back into society and prosper. These students not only completed high school but went on to higher education. They found jobs in society and are successful adults. Many of the students had a desire to share this information in hopes that other students that are struggling would take advantage of the educational opportunity at ECCAS.

Empirical Implications

Five participants and the people associated with them made up five separate nested cases. The five nested cases combined with an additional participant from the focus group confirmed empirically that ECCAS was a major contributor in raising their grades. Not only did the participants raise their grades, they stayed in school and graduated. This contrasts with most

students that are suspended or expelled from school. Most students who find themselves in this type of situation end up in the school-to-prison pipeline (Kruse, 2012, p. 17). This case study also presented evidence that ECCAS helped the participants become more socially and behaviorally acceptable in society reflecting on Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological systems theory. The participants learned how to deal with others and authority. Several of the participants' lives changed through them accepting Christ as their Savior, which steers them in the opposite direction of dealing with law enforcement in negative ways (Skiba, 2014).

Practical Implications

This case study provides much needed practical data to substantiate that ECCAS is a different type of alternative school that is truly restoring students back into education and a promising future. Participants from all five of the nested cases and a sixth participant that participated all graduated and went on to college. This study included six participants, and it is possible that not all students would go in this direction. However, these students were selected randomly, and it is verified that most students who attend ECCAS do find success in their future.

Accordingly, this case study also found that the people, the teacher, pastor, and administrators made the difference in each participant's life. Each of these people exemplified a Christ-centered life and the difference it made in their lives, which was a major influence on the participants. The teachers, principals, pastor, and superintendent all influenced the participants' lives through their own. The Bible says in I Thessalonians 1:2-7,

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you. (NIV)

Each of the participants felt important and knew that someone cared about them. Their lives were verified through the time they spent at ECCAS.

Delimitations and Limitations

The scope of this case study was limited to participants over the age of 18. The purpose of this delimitation was to make sure the participants had graduated and had time to make decisions about their life, in order to see if the post-graduate outcomes of the participants were affected through the education they received at ECCAS. The participants included two female and four male participants. The gender was also important to verify that both genders attended alternative schools and had the same type of experience at ECCAS.

This study was a case study of ECCAS rather than phenomenological study of Christian schools, because ECCAS is the only Christian alternative school in the United States. The purpose of this case study was to examine ECCAS to see if this school makes a difference in the lives of the students that attend.

There were some limitations in ethnicity due to availability of the participants. The students that participated were Caucasian and African American and all lived in the state of Virginia. Others were contacted; however, they were unable to participate for various reasons.

Recommendations for Future Research

This was a bounded case study on ECCAS (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). This study presents opportunities for future research. A collective case study of non-Christian alternative schools could present meaningful data to substantiate the findings in this case study. The findings could be completely opposite since most of the literature shows that a clear majority of students in the same situations as these participants found themselves in do not graduate. An ethnographic study could also be conducted on the students who attended ECCAS to further prove or disprove

their successful futures. An ethnographic study would cover a longer time period and follow the participants' lives farther into the future. This study could also lead to a grounded study of Christian education. There are many opportunities and directions to continue the research in the area of students that are suspended or expelled from school and what type of direction and schools they choose. A future study with a more varied ethnical group and larger number of participants could provide more depth into the area of what happens to people after they graduate from an alternative school. An extended or longitudinal study could also be done on the lives of the students who attend alternative schools to see if these students revert back to the things that got them into the alternative schools. Possible questions for future qualitative studies could include:

- Is there statistical information that proves more students who attend Christian alternative schools graduate and continue their education in post-secondary institutes?
- Is there a difference in the various ethnicities as to who continues their education past the high-school level after attending an alternative school?
- What are the statistics of high-school graduates in the Christian alternative school verses the public alternative school?

Summary

In conclusion of this case study, the most important fact that is apparent is that East Coast Christian Alternative School does make a difference in the lives of students who attend. Students' lives are changed in the academic, social/behavioral, and spiritual aspects, thus restoring the students back to the traditional track of education. One of the participants, Ethan, shared that after attending ECCAS, he had a better idea of what real friends are and it helped him find and make good friends that could last a lifetime. Ethan (personal communication) shared, "I

met really good friends at the sister school and I know I'll be friends with them for life." He also shared that before ECCAS he was famous for misbehaving, and the alternative school taught him that he did not need to stand out for bad behavior, but rather it was better to be a part of the group as a whole. Ethan said, "I had a spotlight show on me because I was always acting up and always being the goof ball, so after alternative school, I just kind of tried to blend in a little bit more." Ethan said the alternative school helped him learn how to make good friends and how to be one.

The participants shared that it was not the school, but the employees of the school that made the difference in their life. ECCAS is not just a Christian alternative school; it is a place where people feel loved and are a part of something. Christ is the center of everything and everyone that is a part of ECCAS. That is what makes the difference.

References

- A Nation at Risk. (1983). *A Nation at Risk - April 1983*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>
- Allman, K., & Slate, J. (2011). School discipline in public education: A brief review of current practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(2), 1-7.
- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2013). Out of school suspension and expulsion. *Pediatrics*, 100-1007. doi:10.1542/peds.2012-3932
- Aminch, R. J., & Asi, H. D. (2015, April). Review of Constructivism and Social Constructivism. *Journal of Social Sciences, Literature and Languages*, 1(1), 9-16.
- Association of Christian Schools International. (n.d.) *ACSI: About ACSI & membership*. Retrieved from <https://www.acsi.org/about-acsi-and-membership>
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175-1184.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 1-26.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*. 2, 21-41. Retrieved from: <https://www.uky.edu/~cushe2/Bandura/Bandura1999AJSP.pdf>
- Bender, C. (2016, May 10). *Religion and spirituality: History, discourse, measurement*. Retrieved from <http://vps111894.vps.ovh.ca/religion-and-spirituality-history-discourse-measurement.pdf>
- Blomberg, N. (2004). Effective discipline for misbehavior: in school vs. out of school suspension. *Concept Journal*, 27, 1-11.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International encyclopedia of education* (Vol. 3, pp. 37-43). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Buck, S. (2012). Special education vouchers are beneficial: A response to. *Journal of Law & Education*, 41(4), 651-663.
- Carver, P. R., Lewis, L., & Tice, P. (2010). Alternative schools and programs for public school students at risk of educational failure: 2007-08. *National Center for Educational Statistics*, 1-21.
- Child Care & Early Education Research Connections. (2016). *Survey research and questionnaires*. Retrieved from <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/datamethods/survey.jsp>
- Cooling, T. (2014, Jan.). Facing two ways? Reflections on recent research on religious schools. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 35(1), 123-126.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cubit. (2015). *Lynchburg demographics*. Retrieved from <http://www.virginia-demographics.com/lynchburg-demographics>
- Dang, L. (2013, July 23). *Why I went from being a top student to an expelled dropout*. Retrieved from <https://acestoohigh.com/2013/07/23/why-i-went-from-being-a-top-student-to-an-expelled-dropout/>
- Dickerson, S. L. (2014). (In)tolerable zero tolerance policy. *eJournal of Education Policy*. Retrieved from <http://nau.edu/COE/eJournal/>
- East Coast Christian Alternative School. (2017). *Pseudonym website*.

- Encyclopedia of Children's Health. (n.d.). *Alternative school*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthofchildren.com/A/Alternative-School.html>
- Evans, M. P., & Didlick-Davis, C. R. (2012). Organizing to end the school-to-prison pipeline: An analysis of grassroots organizing campaigns and policy solutions. *Ejournal of Education Policy*, 1-7.
- Feuerborn, L. L., Wallace, C., & Tyre, A. D. (2013). Gaining Staff Support for Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports: A Guide for Teams. *Beyond Behavior*, 22(2), 27-34.
- Feuerborn, L. L., Wallace, C., & Tyre, A. D. (2016). A qualitative analysis of middle and high school teacher perceptions of schoolwide positive behavior supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 18(4), 219-229.
- Regina M. Foley & Lan-Sze Pang. "Alternative Education Programs: Program and Student Characteristics." *High School Journal* (Eric) 89, no. 3 (Feb-March 2006): 10-21.
- Gjelten, E. A. (2017). *What are zero tolerance policies in schools?* Retrieved from <http://education-law.lawyers.com/school-law/whats-a-zero-tolerance-policy.html>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Henault, C. (2001). Zero tolerance in schools. *Journal of Law and Education*, 30(3), 547-553.
- Hewitt, R. R. (2014, November). Evangelism as discipleship, implications for theological education and leadership formation. *International Review of Mission*, 103(2), 200-214.
- Iselin, A-M. (2010, April 27). Research on school suspension. *Center for Child and Family Policy*.
https://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/familyimpact/2010/Suspension_Research_Brief_2010-04-27.pdf

- Kennedy-Lewis, B. (2015). Second chance or no chance? A case study of one urban alternative middle school. *Journal of Educational Change, 16*(2), 145-169.
- Knight, D., & Wadhwa, A. (2014, Spring). Expanding opportunity through critical restorative justice, portraits of resilience at the individual and school level. *Schools: Studies in Education, 11*(1), 11-33.
- Koenig, H. G. (2012). Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications. *International Scholarly Research Network Psychiatry, 2012*, 1-33.
doi:10.5402/2012/278730
- Kruse, T. L. (2012). *Zero-tolerance discipline approaches: Perspectives from exemplary alternative schools* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Kurth, J. A., & Enyart, M. (2016). Schoolwide positive behavior supports and students with significant disabilities. *Research & Practice For Persons With Severe Disabilities, 41*(3), 216-222.
- Langholz, B. (2005). *Case-control study, nested*. In P. Armitage & T. Colton (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of biostatistics* (Vol. 1, pp. 646-655).
- Lassen, S. R., Steele, M. M., & Sailor, W. (2006). The relationship of school-wide positive behavior support to academic achievement in an urban middle school. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*(6), 701-712.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Mallett, C. A. (2015). The school-to-prison pipeline: A critical review of the punitive paradigm shift. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 33*(1), 15-24.
- McAndrews, T. (2001). Zero tolerance policies. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED451579.pdf>. (ED451579)

- McLeod, S. (2016). *Bandura - Social learning theory*. Retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>
- Mongan, P., & Walker R. (2012). The road to hell is paved with good intentions: A historical, theoretical, and legal analysis of zero-tolerance weapons policies in American schools. *Preventing School Failure, 56*(4), 232-240.
- Morones, A. (2016, November 26). *Corporal punishment persists in U.S. schools*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/10/23/09spanking_ep.h33.html
- Morrison, G. M., & Skiba, R. "Promises and Perils." *Psychology in the Schools 38*, no. 2 (2001): 173-184
- Munro, M. (2013, May 3). *Stopping traffic: Keeping kids out of the school-to-prison pipeline*. Retrieved March 30, 2017 from <http://commons.trincoll.edu/edreform/2013/05/stopping-traffic-keeping-kids-out-of-the-school-to-prison-pipeline/>
- National Center for Educational Statistics*, (2017, March): 1-21
- National Science Foundation. (2002). *An overview of quantitative and qualitative collection methods*. Retrieved from https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057_4.pdf
- Nolan, K. M. (2011). Oppositional behavior in urban schooling: Toward a theory of resistance for new times. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 24*(5), 559-572.
- Paquette, D., & Ryan, J. (2001, July 12). *Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory*. Retrieved from http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/providers/early_steps/training/documents/bronfenbrenners_ecological.pdf
- Quinn, M., & Poirier, J. (2006). *Study of effective alternative education programs: Final grant report*. Washington, DC: American Institute for Research.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, K. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Sisk, J. E. (2017). *Alternative school*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthofchildren.com/A/Alternative-School.html>
- Skiba, R. J. (2014). The failure of zero tolerance. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 22(4), 27-33.
- Smith, D. D. (2014, April 30). *Emotional or behavioral disorders defined*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.com/reference/article/emotional-behavioral-disorders-defined/>
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stake, R. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. (2008). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 119-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Steenbeek, W., & Kreis, C. (2015, June). Where broken windows should be fixed. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 52(4), 511-533.
- Sullivan, C., Dollard, N., Sellers, B., & Mayo, J. (2010). Rebalancing response to school-based offenses: A civil citation program. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 8(4), 279-294.
- Teske, S. C. (2011). A study of zero tolerance policies in schools: a multi-integrated systems approach to improve outcomes for adolescents. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 24(2), 88-97.
- Teske, S. C., Huff, B., & Graves, C. (2013). Collaborative role of courts in promoting outcomes for students: The relationship between arrest, graduation rates, and school safety. *Family Court Review*, 5(3), 418-426.
- Trustees of Dartmouth College. (2016). *Dartmouth*. Retrieved from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~interviewers/interviewing/questions.html>

- U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Digest of education statistics*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_169.asp
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *School climate and discipline: Know the data*. Retrieved Dec. 28, 2017 from www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/data.html
- Vaandering, D. D. (2013). Student teacher, and administrator perspectives on harm: Implications for implementing safe and caring school initiatives. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 33(4),298-318.
- Wilkerson, K., Afacan, K., Perzigian, A., Justin, W., & Lequia, J. (2016, Feb.). Behavior-focused alternative schools: Impact on student outcomes. *Behavioral Disorders*, 41(2), 81-94.
- Wilkerson, K. L. (2016k, March). Academic remediation 13 focused alternative schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 37(2), 67-77.
- Wolcott, F. H. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing* (2nd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and method* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter**From:** IRB, IRB**Sent:** Thursday, August 31, 2017 3:40 PM**To:** Carniol, Dianne S**Cc:** Ackerman, Margaret Elizabeth (School of Education); IRB, IRB**Subject:** IRB Approval 2956.083117: A Case Study of a Christian Alternative School

Dear ,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to this approval email.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research***The Graduate School****LIBERTY**
UNIVERSITY.*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter

August 1, 2018

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences and post-school outcomes for students who attended Liberty Christian Alternative School. You will be asked questions pertaining to how attending Liberty Christian Alternative School influenced you in the areas of academics, socially, and spiritually. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, attended Liberty Christian Alternative School, completed a high school diploma, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group and a one-on-one interview. It should take approximately thirty minutes for the interview and approximately thirty to forty-five minutes for the focus group for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential

To participate, complete and return the consent document to the researcher, and contact me to schedule an interview at Dcarniol@liberty.edu. Please list times of availability for the interview.

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please click on the accept button at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study. Then email the form back to me.

Sincerely,

Dianne Carniol
Educational Specialist

APPENDIX C: IRB Approval Consent Form Participant

CONSENT FORM

Students

A Case Study of a Christian Alternative School

Dianne Carniol

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of Liberty Christian Alternative School. You were selected as a possible participant because you attended LCAS and completed graduation. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Dianne Carniol, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences and post school outcomes for students who attended Liberty Christian Alternative School. There are three main points of interest that will be addressed. What role does attending LCAS play in a student's academic, social, and spiritual development and post-school outcomes?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: Answer a short questionnaire that will take approximately five to ten minutes. Participate in a personal interview that will be recorded and should take approximately thirty minutes. Participate in a focus group that should take approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. (The focus group is optional.) Sign a waiver to allow me to use school documentation to verify school attendance, grades, graduation date.

Risks and Benefits of Participation: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the empirical significance of this study that will fill the gap in present research on alternative schools. This case study will give relevance to other alternative schools, but the Christian element will add a new contribution to the information that could change the outcome for the other students involved.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Liberty Christian Alternative School. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Dianne Carniol. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 434-944-9972 or Dcarniol@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Beth Ackerman, at mackerman@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: IRB Approval Consent Non-Student

CONSENT FORM

Parents, Teachers, Pastors, Administrators, and Founder

A Case Study of a Christian Alternative School

Dianne Carniol

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of Liberty Christian Alternative School. You were selected as a possible participant because you are associated with a student who has attended LCAAS and completed graduation. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Dianne Carniol, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences and post school outcomes for students who attended Liberty Christian Alternative School. There are three main points of interest that will be addressed. What role does attending LCAS play in a student's academic, social, and spiritual development and post-school outcomes?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to participate in a personal interview that will be recorded and should take approximately thirty minutes.

Risks and Benefits of Participation: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the empirical significance of this study that will fill the gap in present research on alternative schools. This case study will give relevance to other alternative schools, but the Christian element will add a new contribution to the information that could change the outcome for the other students involved.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked

computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Liberty Christian Alternative School. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Dianne Carniol. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 434-944-9972 or Dcarniol@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Beth Ackerman, at mackerman@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E: Beginning Survey - Questionnaire**Beginning Survey - Questionnaire**

Question 1: Did you ever attend East Coast Christian Alternative School? Yes or No

Question 2: How long were you a student at ECCAS? A. Less than one semester

B. One semester

C. More than one semester

Question 3: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement.

My experience at East Coast Christian Alternative School made a difference in my life.

Do you: A. strongly agree, B. somewhat agree, C. neither agree nor disagree, D. somewhat disagree, or E. strongly disagree (Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, 2016)

Question 4: Would you be willing to participate in a case study pertaining to ECCAS?

Yes or No

If you answered yes to the above question, please provide your name and contact

information. Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

APPENDIX F: Interview Questions for Students

Standard open-ended interview questions for students

1. Please describe your high school experience. (Give as much detail as possible.)
2. If you could change your high school experience, what changes would you make?
3. What is a highlight of your high school experience? Is there something that will stand out; something that you will always remember?
4. How would you like to be remembered?
5. What have been the biggest failures or frustrations in your life?
6. Tell me about a person or event that has markedly changed you.

Questions 1-6 (Trustees of Dartmouth College, 2016)

7. What was school like at East Coast Christian Alternative School, detail a day of school sharing specifics about academics?
8. Explain how mentors were used and your ideas about their effectiveness or ineffectiveness for you.
9. How did ECCAS, if at all prepare you for :
 - A. college
 - B. employment
 - C. how you relate to others/including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
10. Do you think you would have still graduated even if you didn't attend ECCAS?

APPENDIX G: Interview Questions for Parents

Standard open-ended interview questions for parents.

1. What is your overall evaluation of your child's high school experience?
2. Why did you send your child to East Coast Christian Alternative School?
3. Why was your child sent to an alternative school?
4. How did ECCAS help your child?
5. What person or event helped your child while attending ECCAS?
6. Explain the feedback you got from your child while they were attending ECCAS.
7. What were some things you liked and didn't like about ECCAS?
8. Please explain the impact, positive or negative, that ECCAS has on your child.
9. How did ECCAS, if at all prepare your child for :
 - A. college
 - B. employment
 - C. how they relate to others/including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
10. Explain how the mentoring program helped or didn't help your child.

APPENDIX H: Interview Questions for School Pastor, Teachers, and Administrators**Standard open-ended interview questions for the school pastor, teachers and administrators**

1. What is your overall feeling or attitude about the program at ECCAS?
2. What are the most common reasons for students enrolling at ECCAS?
3. How does ECCAS help the students and what makes it different from other alternative schools?
4. What type of special programs are offered to help students attending ECCAS?
5. What are some things you would like to add or change about ECCAS?
6. How is the mentor program beneficial to the alternative school students?
7. How has ECCAS influenced the life of the student's:
 - A. toward higher education
 - B. for future employment
 - C. how they relate to others/ including authority
 - D. spiritual growth
8. Is there a specific number of times a student is allowed to return to ECCAS and how often do students return?
9. Can you share anything that you remember specifically about (list of the five students in the survey)?

APPENDIX I: Interview Questions for Founder

Specific questions for founder of the alternative school

1. Why did you begin the alternative school?
2. What are the challenges of the alternative school?
3. What are some of the success of the alternative school?
4. What are some recommendations you could make for other founders of Christian alternative schools?

APPENDIX J: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Open-ended Questions for students

1. What is your overall evaluation of how the program at ECCAS is helping students?
2. What are the most common reasons for students enrolling at ECCAS?
3. How does ECCAS help the students and what makes it different from other alternative schools?
4. What are some things you would like to add or change about ECCAS?
5. Explain how the mentor program helps students
6. Discuss some social benefits of attending ECCAS.

APPENDIX K: Table of Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Attending College</u>
Ava	F	Caucasian	yes
Katie	F	Caucasian	yes
Alexander	M	Caucasian	yes
Jerimiah	M	African-American	yes
Jacob	M	Caucasian	yes
Ethan	M	Caucasian	yes

APPENDIX L: Sample Interview

Interviewer: This is a recording of Ava's interview, and I'm going to begin with asking her a few questions. Ava, please describe your high school experience. Give some details if possible as to, your high school experience, I mean like what happened to you that you decided to go to the alternative school? And then tell me some things about the alternative school that were either positive or negative.

Ava: Okay. I went to alternative school in the middle of my junior year.

Interviewer: Keep going.

Ava: I went to alternative school in the middle of my junior year, and the reason I went there was I had a lot of drama with a couple other girls that were in school. We got into arguments outside of school and accusations were made over text messages and threats were made, and so ... Well, I was the one that made them. They weren't made towards me. The superintendent and the youth pastor, and a couple other of the administration and my parents decided it would be safer for me to go to alternative school. So I went to alternative school. At the time, Mrs. Miller was the teacher. For the first couple weeks in alternative school, I was still having problems with the people that were in the school, in the regular school, so I was dismissed a couple more times from alternative school. I had a really rough high school year.

Interviewer: I'm sorry to hear that. Wow.

Aava: Yeah, but being in alternative school, I was there all throughout the rest of the year. At the time, there wasn't a lot of people in there because it was new. I was

there the first year that it was open. Mrs. Miller was the teacher, and she is one of the most amazing women I've ever met. She helped me a lot through it, and even going through all the drama still ...

Interviewer: Did you finish your high school in the alternative school?

Ava: Yes. I didn't go back my senior year. I went to alternative school. I just stayed in there. I kept myself in there.

Interviewer: Did you graduate with your graduating class?

Ava: Yes, I did. I got to walk and everything.

Interviewer: Well, that's great. If you could change your high school experience, what changes would you make? What things would you have done different?

Ava: To not get kicked out?

Interviewer: Well, if it was a positive thing for you and you're glad you went there, then, no, you wouldn't have changed that.

Ava: Right. Well, I am glad that I went there. I'm not glad the way that I ended up in there, but I'm glad that I went there because I struggled a lot with my grades in high school, and being in alternative school, I graduated with perfect grades.

Interviewer: Wow.

Ava: So it was a lot of help academically, especially.

Interviewer: Good. That's the stuff I want to hear. What is the highlight of your high school experience? Is there something that will stand out, something that you'll always remember about the high school experience?

Ava: Just the teachers. In alternative school, they switched teachers three different times when I was there. The first one was Mrs. Miller, and the second one

was Mrs. Anderson. Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Anderson helped me a lot just, I mean, in my personal life and in my academic life.

Interviewer: Good, good. So they were more than just teachers. Great.

Ava: They were definitely more than teachers.

Interviewer: How would you like to be remembered? If you look back at your high school, how would you like to be remembered?

Ava: Definitely, I guess, just the way that I excelled in my own way, academically and personally. It helped a lot with struggled that I was going through at the time. They kind of went away, and I had people to talk to, and my grades shot up.

Interviewer: Wow.

Ava: Before I got put in alternative school, I had to do summer school because I was failing and I just didn't apply myself completely. But in alternative school, it was easier for me to focus. Having one-on-one help with just one teacher, instead of having to switch to however many different teachers, seven different teachers, it was a lot easier just to have some one-on-one help.

Interviewer: Wow, that's great. So what have been the biggest failures or frustrations in your life? When I say that, I'm talking about school.

Ava: I guess just testing.

Interviewer: Testing was your ...

Ava: Yes, that's not my specialty. I am not good at testing.

Interviewer: It's that way for a lot of people. Tell me about a person or an event that's markedly changed you. If there was one in school or if it was a person maybe at church? Is there anyone that you can think of during your high school?

Ava: Mrs. Anderson

Interviewer: Mrs. Anderson?

Ava: Yep.

Interviewer: And she was one of your teachers in the alternative school.

Ava: Yes, she was an alternative school teacher, but she is one person that helped me personally through every struggle that I went through.

Interviewer: That's great. That's great. Have you ever told her? Does she know?

Ava: Yeah. I just, I stopped up there before I came down here.

Interviewer: Great. So what was school like at East Coast Christian Alternative School? Detail a day, sharing some specifics about your academics.

Ava: Okay. Well, we parked away from all the other students and we went in before the other students got there. I'm not sure if it's still in the same room as it was. At first we had ... All the doors were locked. All are locked here too, but we were really kept away from everybody inside the sister school, which kind of bothered some of us, just because a lot of them weren't in there for being a threat. They were in there for either academic reasons or got kicked out for partying or doing something they weren't supposed to. But it's not like we were a threat because it's not like we were going to attack somebody. So, I mean, that was kind of irritating. And we weren't allowed to go to any football games or any outside events at all. So I didn't get to go to junior or senior, my junior or senior year. I didn't get to experience any of the high school football games or basketball games with any of my other friends that weren't here.

Interviewer: Is that part of the deal when you go there?

Ava: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yeah. You have to be drug tested. They cut your hair out very often. I don't know, there was a lot of things attached to it that I didn't like, but ...

Interviewer: They drug tested you on a regular basis?

Ava: Not every day, but maybe every other month. And they would chop your hair out, send it off to make sure you weren't doing anything that you shouldn't. But we would go in in the morning and we would all get our computers out of the closet, because, you know, it's all online. So we would get our computers out of the closet and we'd go to our tables and we would sit there and plug them into a charger, put our computers in, and get to work. I mean, it's just like regular school, just everything's online. We would have lunch. We would get our lunch from the cafeteria that's inside the sister school or I don't know who goes there. We ate lunch in our room. We weren't allowed to eat in the cafeteria with anybody. We ate in our room, and then after we were done, we would clean up and we would go back to work. We had ... We did gym and stuff. We would walk around the track and whoever was in alternative school, that was our class, that was our group. We were all different ages, too. It wasn't just high schoolers. I mean, they weren't all seniors or juniors with me.

Interviewer: Right, so it was all grade levels.

Ava: It was all different grade levels, yeah. But I mean, we all became kind of like a big family in there because there's not many people. It's not hundreds of students like it is here. When I went there, we didn't get more than 12 students. So we were a big family.

Interviewer: Explain how the mentors were used, and your ideas about their effectiveness or ineffectiveness for you.

Ava: Well, like I said, I had three different ones.

Interviewer: That teacher was your mentor? Because I know they have regular mentors now.

Ava: Oh yeah, yeah. My mentor's name was Rachelle, I think her name is.

Interviewer: What did she do for you?

Ava: She was kind of like ... They didn't want there to be counselors, and she really wasn't like a counselor. She didn't try to fix my life. She was kind of just a person for me to talk to if I needed to and hang out with. We'd go to Main Street and get coffee and just sit there and chat. She was young. She wasn't like my age. She was older than me, probably like ten years older than me. I mean, she just helped me a lot and just we would talk about things that I had went through that week, and then the next week, she would come back with stuff that she had found on it for me to read and try to help me with. A lot of it was scripture because they were like Christian mentors. They were from a local college.

Interviewer: How did ECCAS, well, the alternative school, if at all, prepare you for college, employment, how you related to other people, including authority, and spiritual growth?

Ava: It definitely did not prepare me for college.

Interviewer: It didn't?

Ava: No, not at all. Not one bit. Actually, because everything's online and college is not, and it's not ... You teach yourself in alternative school unless you need help. Then you get a little one-on-one help with that specific problem that you have. But it's different teachers online, so you email them. Some of them live in France. I have a teacher that lives in France, and so she could only get back to me every three days because we were on different schedules.

Interviewer: So you didn't feel it prepared you for college. How about employment?

Ava: Not really. I've been working since I was 16, so I was already employed.

Interviewer: How about how you relate to others, including authority? Did it help you with that at all?

Ava: No.

Interviewer: No?

Ava: We weren't really in contact with any authority except our teacher at the time, our mentor, and Lou, the officer.

Interviewer: How about spiritual growth? Anything there?

Ava: On our online program, we didn't have a specific Bible class, so we would do devotions in the morning. We would all sit at a table together, our lunch table, and we would talk about devotions. I wouldn't say the alternative school itself helped me with my spiritual growth, but the teachers that they had in there did.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Good. Do you think that you would have still graduated if you didn't attend the alternative school?

Ava: No. I think I would have failed academically, or I would have gotten dismissed to go to a public school.

Interviewer: Well, that was very honest.

Ava: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, thank you. I appreciate it, and thank you for participating in this interview.

Ava: You're welcome.

APPENDIX M: Codes, Sub Themes, and Themes

<u>Codes</u>	<u>Sub Themes</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u># of Times Appeared in Data</u>
Success Successful Restoration Reconciliation Advancement Opportunity	Life future change	Life Changing Factors	25
Responsibility Self-discipline Prepared Preparation Flexibility	personal growth introspect	Personal Growth	22
Spiritual growth Humility Grace/gracious Loving Self-esteem Safe Protected	spirituality Christ life	Spiritual aspect of Life	29

APPENDIX N: Stakes Worksheet

Dear Ms. Carniol,

One-time non-exclusive world rights in the English language for print and electronic formats are granted for your requested use of the selections below in your dissertation:

Worksheet 1, page 5
Figure 2.1, page 19
Worksheet 5A, page 51

from Multiple Case Study Analysis, by Robert E. Stake

Permission fee due: No Charge

This permission is subject to the following conditions:

1. A credit line will be prominently placed and include: the author(s), title of book, editor, copyright holder, year of publication and "Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press" (or author's name where indicated).
2. Permission is granted for one-time use only as specified in your request. Rights herein do not apply to future editions, revisions or other derivative works.
3. The requestor agrees to secure written permission from the original author where indicated.
4. The permission granted herein does not apply to quotations from other sources that have been incorporated in the Selection.
5. The requestor warrants that the material shall not be used in any manner which may be considered derogatory to this title, content, or authors of the material or to Guilford Press.
6. Guilford retains all rights not specifically granted in this letter.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Best wishes,
Angela

Guilford Publications, Inc.
370 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1200
New York, NY 10001-1020

permissions@guilford.com
<http://www.guilford.com/permissions>

APPENDIX O: Audit Trail

Select topic

Research and Write Paper

Send to Committee, Make correction

Send to Research Consultant

Presentation and IRB Approval

Begin Study

Interviews:	Ethan and Ava	9/11/17
	Mrs. Miller	9/13/17
	Jerimiah and Mother	9/13/17
	Alexander	9/14/17
	Jacob	9/17/17
	Jacob's Dad	9/22/17
	Mr. Jones	9/22/17
	Katie's Mother	9/27/17
	Katie	10/01/17
	Alexander's Mother	10/03/17
	Mrs. Johnson	10/04/17
	Dr. Smith	10/10/17
	Mr. Harris	10/11/17
	Ava's Mother	10/21/17

Get Transcripts of interviews

Make available to interviewees

Get School Transcripts

Finish Paper

Send to Committee

Send to Research Consultant

Make Revisions and send to Editor

APPENDIX P: Dartmouth Permission Letter

Hi Dianne,

Thanks for your note. I'm not sure what you mean by "the Dartmouth interest inquiry list". If you are referring to the Dartmouth application for undergraduate admission, that is fine.

Thanks,

Paul

DARTMOUTH

Paul E. Sunde | *Director of Admissions*

6016 McNutt Hall | Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

(603) 646-1477 | admissions.dartmouth.edu

[Blog](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Snapchat](#)