

**Recommendations to Solve the Problem of Increased Referrals at the Escambia
County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama**

by

Ronda Hoffman

An Applied Research Report Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

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Approved by:

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022. The rationale for this study was the referrals written can impact the students in more ways than the given discipline. The central research question was, How can the problem of increased referrals be solved at the Escambia County Alternative School? Three forms of data collected for this applied research included qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to include interviews, a focus group, and surveys. Qualitative data were analyzed by codes and themes. Quantitative data were analyzed by averaging the results of each question. Recommendations to solve the problem included developing a referral process for all teachers at Escambia County Alternative School to follow, establishing a process for students with disabilities, establishing schoolwide rules for students to follow, and establishing schoolwide strategies for teachers to follow.

Keywords: Alternative school, discipline referral, expulsion, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, positive behavior intervention and supports, referral process, restorative justice, social and emotional learning, transition plan, universal design for learning.

Role of the Researcher

Ronda Hoffman currently teaches math at Theodore High School in Mobile, Alabama. She taught in Alabama public schools for six years and in Florida public schools for two years. Her education includes a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama; a master's degree from Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky; and a master's degree from New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls, New York. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Education from Liberty University. Previously she was science chair for four years. As a department chair and teacher, she is very interested in lowering the number of referrals in schools. Since she previously worked at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, she knew there could have been bias present during her research. She conducted her research without any pre-conceived ideas of possible solutions. As a researcher it is important to not allow the biases in and let the literature review and research determine the recommendations.

Permission to Conduct Research

Permission to conduct research was granted by Keiana White, the principal of Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Permission granted access to conduct the research at the school about the problem of increased referrals and the referral process (see Appendix A).

Ethical Considerations

Doctoral students are guardians of the information they collect, analyze, annotate, curate, preserve, and disseminate. Ethical methods should be used to protect each participant. The researcher ensured all participants did not experience any risk. The research did not use deception and discriminatory practices (Claxton & Michael, 2021). Pseudonyms were used for each teacher to protect their identity. Interviews, focus group and surveys were conducted with the teachers and the students at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Data analysis of field notes was immediately transcribed after the interviews in the researcher's home office. All materials were stored with password protection. The information in this report will not be shared or distributed outside Escambia County Alternative School. Institutional Review Board was not required.

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report consists of the Organizational Profile, an Introduction to the Problem, the Significance of the Research, the Purpose Statement, the Central Research Question, and Definitions for this research.

Organizational Profile

The site for this educational research study was Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Escambia County is a public school system located in south Alabama on the Florida border. The mission of the Escambia County School System is to provide engaging and comprehensive instructional programs that will enable our students to graduate college and/or career-ready (Escambia County Schools, 2022, para. 1). Escambia County Alternative School houses students sent from the three high schools and the three middle schools in the county. The population of the school can range from 20 to 100 students. Not a set number of students can attend the Escambia County Alternative School. The demographics of the school are always changing based on the students that have been enrolled and the students that have been sent back to their home school. There was a total of five teachers: one math, one science, one history, one English, and one special education. Each teacher was responsible for the curriculum of their subject area. The school has two leaders - the principal and the mental health coordinator. The

leaders enforce any discipline for students at the school. They also conduct the faculty meetings and teach any new strategies or methods to be used in the classroom.

Introduction to the Problem

The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). The 2021-2022 school year was Mrs. White's first year as principal at Escambia County Alternative School. After the faculty and staff attended the three-day Capturing Kids Hearts workshop, she and the teachers implemented some of the new strategies into the daily routine at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Some of the strategies from the workshop worked on relationships with the students. Teachers should find ways to get to know the students, their likes and dislikes, their families to include parents and siblings. Teachers should build a rapport with them, so the classroom climate is not so sterile. The goal of Capturing Kids Hearts is to decrease referrals and increase academics in schools (Flippen Group, 2022). After implementing these new strategies, referrals did not decrease at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama.

Significance of the Research

The benefits of decreasing the number of referrals at Escambia County Alternative School would be beneficial to the students, teachers, administration, and community. The students would benefit from decreased referrals in areas of achievement (Arcia, 2006), retention (Civil Rights Project, 2000), and self-worth (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). The community would benefit since less students are dropping out of school and becoming part of the juvenile justice system (Baker et al., 2001; Civil Rights Project, 2000). Teachers benefit when there are less referrals. There is better behavior in the classroom and the teachers can teach (Flippen Group,

2022). The students are assigned to the alternative school because of their behavior or number of referrals. If a teacher could help a student see their self-worth enough to improve their behavior, it could change the entire life path of that student (Chao, et. al., 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. This applied research study included both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The first approach was semi-structured interviews. All five teachers were interviewed. The second approach was a focus group. All five teachers and the administrator participated in the focus group. The third approach was surveys. Current students and students that have been sent back to their home school were given surveys to complete. The survey was about the number of referrals they received while at their home school and at the alternative school. The survey also included questions about the teachers' discipline strategies at their home school and at the alternative school.

Central Research Question

How can the problem of increased referrals be solved at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama?

Definitions

1. Alternate Discipline- Alternate discipline is a type of discipline to use in schools rather than removing the student from the classroom or the school. A type of alternate discipline is restorative justice, positive behavior intervention and supports, and social and emotional learning (Mergler et al., 2014).

2. Alternative School – Alternative school placement is a higher level of punishment than in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension (Allman & Slate, 2011).
3. Capturing Kid’s Hearts- Capturing Kid's Hearts is a social and emotional learning program developed by Flip Flippen. Capturing Kid's Hearts aims to grow positive relationships between students and educators, improving behavior and academic outcomes (Flippen Group, 2022).
4. Classroom Management- Classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to ensure that their classroom runs smoothly, without disruptive behavior from students. It is when teachers have a structured learning environment with clear rules that promote learning as well as consequences that diminish or eliminate behaviors that get in the way of learning (Mulvahill, 2018).
5. Crisis Incident – The emergency or crisis discipline incident is an incident that requires immediate attention from the administration and/or other staff members (REACH MS, n.d.).
6. Discipline Referral – The discipline referral form is a form the administration has developed for the teachers and staff to use to explain and report major and emergency incidents (REACH MS, n.d.).
7. Expulsion – "School expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from a school system for an extensive period of time" (Welsh, 2022, p. 556).
8. School violence- School violence is violence that occurs in the school setting. It describes violent acts that disrupt learning and have a negative effect on students, schools, and the broader community. School violence can happen on school property, on the way to or from school, during a school-sponsored event, or on the way to or from a school-sponsored event (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.).

9. In-School Suspension – In-school suspension (ISS) is a type of discipline or suspension that occurs at school (Allman & Slate, 2011).
10. Major Incident – The major incident is an incident that is severe enough to warrant administration intervention (REACH MS, n.d.).
11. Minor Incident – The minor incident is incidents that can be taken care of by the teacher in the classroom (REACH MS, n.d.).
12. Multi-Tiered System of Supports- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework that works with data and instruction. This is used in a multi-tiered system to support students' academic, emotional and behavior needs. The framework is composed of four components: screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision (American Institutes for Research, 2023).
13. Out-Of-School Suspension – Out-of-school suspension (OSS) is a type of punishment used in public schools since 1960 (Allman & Slate, 2011).
14. Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports – Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) are an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day (Center on PBIS, 2022, para. 4).
15. Professional Development- Professional development is gaining new skills through continuing education and career training after entering the workforce. It can include taking classes or workshops, attending professional or industry conferences, or earning a certificate to expand your knowledge in your chosen field (Parsons, 2022).
16. Relationship Centered Learning- Relationship centered learning (RCL) was developed and maintained by a group of educators and administrators. They believed in a relationship first approach in the classroom. They feel you need to get to know your students first. This will

help the teacher to build and sustain relationships in the classroom. RCL is a holistic approach to prevent negative behaviors and use restorative practices utilizing five components (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2022).

17. Referral Process – The process or steps of writing a discipline referral (REACH MS, n.d.).
18. Restorative Justice – Alternative ways for teachers to handle discipline and for students to learn from their mistakes (Anyon, Gregory, et al., 2016).
19. Schoolwide rules- Schoolwide rules should align with the expectations of the school. They should be measurable and observable. They need to clarify the behaviors for each specific setting and no more than five per setting. They need to be positively stated. They need to be supportive of academic achievement. They need to be applicable to all students. They need to be contextually/culturally appropriate (example, age, grade level, language). The rules need to be agreed upon by at least 80% of all faculty and staff. The rules need to be communicated to the stakeholders of the school (families, community members, district administrators) (REACH MS, n.d.).
20. Schoolwide Strategies- Schoolwide practices refer to routines, structures, and strategies that are agreed upon and used across the school throughout the day (School-wide practices and climate, n.d.).
21. Social and Emotional Learning - Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2022).

22. Students with special needs- A child has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age. They may have problems with schoolwork, communication or behavior (Nidirect government services, n.d.).
23. Transition Plan – Transition plans are programs that give the teachers and students alternative ways to handle discipline (CAST, 2022; Center on PBIS, 2022; Collaboration for academic, social and emotional learning, 2022).
24. Universal Design for Learning – "The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines are tools used in the implementation of UDL, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn" (CAST, 2022, para. 1).
25. Zero Tolerance – Zero tolerance began in the 1980s because of drug procession at school. Today, zero-tolerance activities include drug procession, gang activity, and weapon possession (Allman & Slate, 2011).

Summary

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presented the Organizational Profile, an Introduction to the Problem, the Significance of the Research, the Purpose Statement, Central Research Question, and Definitions for this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report consists of the Narrative Review, a Theoretical Framework, and Summary.

Narrative Review

The purpose of this literature review was to present analyzed and synthesized research topics to better understand the topic. This literature review was completed to understand better why the referrals increased by 50% at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, from a six-week period in October/November 2021 to a six-week period in January/February 2022.

Historical Aspects of School Discipline

Discipline of any form is not new in schools. Teachers have used many types of consequences to help with behavior: verbal consultations, corporal punishment, detention, and fines. School discipline today ranges from in-school suspension, to out-of-school suspension (Allman & Slate, 2011; Arcia, 2006), alternative school placement (Allman & Slate, 2011; Long, Renshaw, Camarota, 2018; Long, Sanetti et al., 2018), and zero tolerance (Allman & Slate, 2011; Baker et al., 2001; Civil Rights Project, 2000) which leads to expulsion (Allman & Slate, 2011; Arcia, 2006).

In-School Suspension

In-school suspensions (ISS) began in the school system because of the controversy over out-of-school suspension. Many schools use ISS, although it may look different across campuses. These are the components that most schools incorporate into in-school suspension that are similar: the student will report to a separate classroom away from their peers upon arrival to school, a certified teacher, aide, or both will oversee the classroom, these students will have their own in-suspension classroom, and they will have an isolated lunch away from other students. Although these students are on campus, they may still get behind academically (Allman & Slate, 2011; Arcia, 2006). Each student will have classwork assigned by their teacher but do not have the opportunity to ask questions and get help as if they were in the regular classroom. Oakland public schools in Oakland, California, saw their students' self-esteem drop and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school when they implemented in school suspension (Allman & Slate, 2011; Arcia, 2006).

Out-of-School Suspension

Out-of-school suspensions (OSS) began in the 1960s. The bad behavior was not being addressed for OSS students. Since the behavior was not addressed, more bad behavior resulted. Some schools have assigned students to OSS for minor offenses, even though the original intent was for major offenses. Originally, the intent of OSS was to alert the student and parents of the misbehavior. Today some students have an extended period of OSS. Many of these students are already low academically, and the extended suspension days make these students even further behind. Some schools assign more students to ISS to keep students off the streets during the suspension. In-school suspension is better at allowing students to think about their offense and

know that their actions have consequences since they must stay on campus (Allman & Slate, 2011; Anyon, Gregory, et al., 2016).

Alternative School

Disciplinary alternative school placement is meant to be a higher-level consequence than in-school or out-of-school suspension. Some behaviors that assign a student to a disciplinary alternative school, such as terroristic threats, drug offenses, and alcohol offenses, will be an automatic placement. Other offenses that can get a student placed at the alternative school are chronic disruptive behavior, refusing to accept other consequences, violence, and other behaviors. Some students are placed at the alternative school for breaking the code of conduct. There is no set number of days for an alternative placement, but most schools are 30 to 45 days (Long, Renshaw, Camarota, 2018; Ohrt et al., 2020; Slaten et al., 2015). Alternative schools have certified teachers, but the teachers may not be certified in the subject they are asked to teach (Allman & Slate, 2011). Most alternative schools also offer a program to address the student's behavior. All alternative schools will offer English, Math, History, and Science. Not all alternative schools will offer all electives. When a student is placed at the alternative school, they will have a class to address their behavior and all four core classes, but they may not have instruction in the electives they had at their home school (Gut & McLaughlin, 2012; Long, Renshaw, Camarota, 2018; Ohrt et al., 2020). Many students attending an alternative school come from low socioeconomic status, have family trouble, and have emotional and physical trauma at home (Slaten et al., 2015).

Zero Tolerance

Many schools across the United States have adopted a zero-tolerance policy (Allman & Slate, 2011; Civil Rights Project, 2000). Zero-tolerance began in the 1980s, mostly because of

drugs being brought to school. Today some of the offenses considered zero-tolerance are drug possession, gang activity, and weapon possession. Some schools even include tobacco use or possession, school disruption, and other less violent behaviors. Chicago Public schools in Chicago, Illinois, had a 51% increase in suspensions the year after adopting their zero-tolerance policy. Some school systems have adopted a zero-tolerance policy because of No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind requires school systems to adopt a zero-tolerance policy that will allow teachers to remove violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom (Allman & Slate, 2011). The National Center for Education Statistics researched 1,234 schools, including elementary, intermediate, and high schools. The survey data showed that the four top reasons schools adopted a zero-tolerance policy were for possession of a firearm, possession of a weapon (other than a firearm), possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs including tobacco, physical attacks, or physical fights (Allman & Slate, 2022; Civil Rights Project, 2000). Of the 1,234 schools that adopted a zero-tolerance policy: 79% for school violence, 79% for tobacco, 87% for alcohol, 88% for drugs, 91% for weapons other than firearms, and 94% for firearms. Of the 1,234 schools the administration reported using other discipline, including expulsion, alternative school, and extended out-of-school suspension. Although schools are adopting a zero-tolerance policy, the number of disciplinary actions for physical aggression, insubordination, and possession of firearms has not changed (Allman & Slate, 2011). The adoption of zero-tolerance policies is controversial. The policies among schools are very different. Schools across the board have the freedom to interpret the law as they see it (Allman & Slate, 2011; Civil Rights Project, 2000). Zero-tolerance policies are ineffective in reducing bad behavior and increasing the number of suspensions of students in the future (Allman & Slate, 2011). Zero-tolerance can also

lead to students failing academically and even dropping out of school (Allman & Slate, 2011; Civil Rights Project, 2000).

Negative Aspects of Discipline Referrals

The consequences of discipline referrals lead to negative aspects in some of the students' lives, both in school and in their future (Gut & McLaughlin, 2012; Slaten et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021). The consequences of referrals can lead to low achievement (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016; Slaten et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021) and in some cases, the students are retained (Baker et al., 2001; Civil Rights Project, 2000; Slaten et al., 2015). The students often get more discipline referrals, leading to even more consequences (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016; Slaten et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021). Such consequences can lead to dissatisfaction with their life and even alienation among peers. (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Many of these students get so far behind they drop out of school, and some end up in the juvenile justice system and are even incarcerated later in life (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016; Slaten et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2021).

The Referral Process

Each school or school system should have a referral process. This process should be taught and explained to every teacher, so the process is the same across the school. The process should also be taught and explained to the students and written in the student handbook for reference for teachers and students (REACH MS, n.d.; Tan et al., 2021). Behaviors should be defined. One teacher may deem a behavior disrespectful while another teacher does not. Since all teachers and administration do not define all behaviors the same, there must be definitions for behavior and all teachers, administration, and students. Similarly, parents must be taught the definitions of behavior. There are minor discipline incidents, major discipline incidents, and crisis discipline incidents (REACH MS, n.d.).

Incident Types

The minor discipline incidents are incidents that can be taken care of by the teacher or the teacher and student, in the classroom. Examples of minor incidents are fighting, talking back, chewing gum, running in the hall, disrespect, and horseplay. This incident does not require a referral (REACH MS, n.d.). A major discipline incident is an incident that is severe enough to warrant administration intervention. Examples of major incidents are fighting, severe cursing, bullying, and disrespect. These do require a referral (REACH MS, n.d.). An emergency or crisis discipline incident is an incident that requires immediate attention from the administration team and/or other staff members. Examples of crisis incidents are fighting, arson/flammables, weapons, drugs, intruders, and bomb threats. These incidents also require a referral (REACH MS, n.d.). Fighting is in all three types of incidents. Fights could be of wide severity. Students could be pushing and shoving, which is not fighting. When students are pushing and shoving, the next step is a punch. That is when it is considered fighting. A student could provoke a verbal or physical fight and should be disciplined as if they were fighting. This is an example of why there needs to be definitions of behavior for discipline referrals (REACH MS, n.d.).

Transition Plans

Many schools today have implemented programs to help reduce the number of referrals for the school: restorative justice (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016), universal design for learning (UDL) (CAST, 2022), positive behavior interventions & supports (PBIS) (Center on PBIS, 2022), social and emotional learning (SEL) (Collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning, 2022), Capturing Kid's Hearts (CKH) (Flippen Group, 2022), relationship centered learning (RCL) (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023), and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) (American Institutes for Research, 2023). These programs give the teachers

and the students alternative ways to handle discipline. (Center on PBIS, 2022; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022; Flippen Group, 2022).

Restorative Justice

Some schools today are giving students the option of restorative intervention (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016). For the restorative intervention to be successful, the student must acknowledge their wrong. If the student acknowledges the wronged activity, other interventions will occur. The two goals of restorative intervention are for those affected by the incident to realize and identify how the actions impacted others and to come together to form a solution, resolving any harm that has taken place. Restorative intervention usually takes place as a small conference or in circles. Sometimes the people that were harmed by the incident are also present. There are four steps to a restorative intervention conference. The first step is for the offender to meet with a facilitator. The facilitator will determine if the offender should attend the restorative intervention conferences or not. Also, the offender can decline the conferences. The offender must accept all responsibility and be willing to right those who were harmed. If the facilitator feels the offender has accepted the responsibility for wrongdoing, then the second step is to attend a conference. The conference may have friends and family of the offender and those the offender harmed present. The third step is for all participants to sit in a circle and face one another. The facilitator will ask questions of the offender and those that were harmed. The fourth step is for the offender and those harmed to devise a plan to prevent future incidents. In most cases, the agreements are written for all to agree upon and sign. Studies in New Zealand, Scotland, and China have shown restorative justice in schools has reduced the number of office discipline referrals. In the United States, schools in Denver, Colorado, Minneapolis, Minnesota,

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Oakland, California have had the same results (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016).

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a method of teaching a curriculum where all learning types are met. UDL minimizes barriers and maximizes learning. It is universal because it is for everyone. It is designed for all learners. Learning is broken down into three areas. Recognition is the "what" of learning. In this area, students are learning in many ways. Next are skills and strategies. Skills and strategies are the "how" of learning. Students will demonstrate their learning in different ways. The last area is caring and prioritizing. Caring and prioritizing are the "why" of learning. The "what," "how," and "why" are the areas of engagement and may serve as ways to get the learners involved (CAST, 2022).

During the engagement, the learner is building interest. To accomplish this, the instructor should optimize individual choice and autonomy. Students should be able to make choices in the classroom. The students should be involved in setting their academic and behavior goals. The instructor should optimize relevance, value, and authenticity. Students are engaged in activities that interest them. Activities and information should be relatable to students socially, by age, ability, race, culture, ethnicity, and gender. The instructor should also minimize threats and distractions. The instructor should control the classroom climate. Instructors may post charts and schedules, so students know what to expect daily. Instructors should also have classroom routines and a way to let students know when a change will occur. The instructor should monitor any background noise in the classroom. Also, the instructor should monitor the length of assignments, activities, and breaks. During engagement, the instructor should also sustain effort and persistence. Instructors also need to post classroom goals and objectives daily and create

challenges with activities. Instructors should use collaboration and community as learning tools in the classroom. During this phase, the learner should also recognize their self-regulation. They should be able to self-assess and reflect on their learning and progress (CAST, 2022).

Representation is the method the material is presented to the learner. Learners learn differently. There is not one method for all learners. The instructor should offer ways of customizing the display of information. Some ways could be the size of text, or other content, the color used, the background contrast, the volume used, and the font used in the classroom. The instructor should offer alternatives for auditory information such as captions, visual diagrams, written transcripts for videos, and/or sign language. The instructor should offer an alternative for visual learners: provide descriptions for images, use touch, and provide physical objects (CAST, 2022).

For action and expression, students should be offered alternative modes if needed. If a student has a physical disability, they should be offered an action that is within their scope of motor skills. Students can be given alternative ways to express their knowledge. An instructor can use multimedia to communicate with their class: text, 3d models, and discussion boards (CAST, 2022).

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) are used in many schools to help with behavior and discipline. PBIS is an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve student outcomes daily. The goal of PBIS is to create schools where all students succeed. Tier 1 provides proactive support, preventing negative behavior. These are supports for all students schoolwide. Tier 2 focused on students at risk of problem behaviors before the behaviors start. This tier will help students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to benefit in school.

Finally, tier 3 is individualized for the student. This level will focus on academics and behavior to help the student succeed academically and emotionally (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Tier 1 principles include that all students should be taught positive social, emotional, and behavioral skills. To prevent unwanted behaviors, intervene early. Use "research-based, scientifically validated interventions" when necessary. All students' progress should be monitored, and data should be used to make decisions. Tier 1 is the foundation for tier 2 and tier 3. When the PBIS systems are in place school-wide, all students and teachers become aware of when students need extra support (Center on PBIS, 2022).

For PBIS to be successful, certain foundational systems must be in place. Such foundational systems require a leadership team. This team needs to be diverse and represent the school. The team should invite stakeholders and family members to join the meetings to give input. They need to monitor the data and ensure all students have access to the support they need. This team will also monitor the effectiveness of the program. The team needs to meet monthly and access the school improvement plan (Center on PBIS, 2022).

The team also needs to ensure the school climate is positive and that the faculty and staff are on board for this change. There also needs to be professional development to refresh faculty and teach new hires the new practices. When teaching the practices to teachers and students, focus on the positive. State the skills that are expected of faculty and students. Do not focus on the negative. All teachers need to have their classroom expectations aligned with the practices of PBIS. Consistency among classrooms will support better behavioral outcomes for students. Teachers and students will design agreements and routines to be used in the classroom together (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Tier 1 needs to address positive behavior. All teachers (or at least 90%) need to be onboard to recognize the students doing what is expected of them. When there is unwanted behavior, the school needs to define office-managed behavior and classroom-managed behavior. When these behaviors are defined, and it is understood how to handle each offense, then tier 1 is consistent across campus (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Unlike tier 1, tier 2 provides support in groups. These students are at a higher risk of more serious behavior problems. The supports for tier 2 include social skills, self-management, and academic support. When tier 1 is in place school-wide, it is easy to see which students need additional support from tier 2. Tier 2 support includes an intervention team with a coordinator. The team assures all students that need tier 2 support receive the additional support promptly. The team will monitor the implementation and the progress of each student. The team needs a member with behavioral experience who can help decide what interventions will be best for the students. The team, regardless of the intervention, needs to monitor data. They need to see if what they are doing is working. The schools need to identify ways to recognize which students need additional support. Some ways include office discipline referrals, screening scores, teacher recommendations, parent recommendations, and formative assessments. No one method will identify all students. Schools must use multiple methods to identify the students needing additional support from tier 2. Faculty and staff need to be trained and have access to professional development to train and coach them. (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Tier 2 should include increased instruction for social, emotional, and behavioral skills. Students need to learn when and where these skills are accepted. Then the students can learn to manage their own behavior. Tier 2 will also involve more adult supervision with increased positive reinforcement. Also, at tier 2, anticipate when the student has problem behavior and try

to eliminate it before it happens. Tier 2 also delivers more academic support for students (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Most schools' tier 3 supports include 1-3% of all students. These students receive a more intensive, individualized program designed for them. Many of these students are highly disruptive, have autism, and have emotional and behavioral disorders. Some may have no diagnosis at all. Tier 3 will also need a team. This team should consist of an administrator, a behavior coach, and members from different departments throughout the school. The behavior support specialist must have applied behavior experience and experience developing multi-agency support. Tier 3 will also monitor data to ensure the process is working and if support needs to change. Tier 3 will include preventing unwanted behavior, teaching appropriate behavior, reinforcing positive behavior, and ensuring the student is safe (Center on PBIS, 2022).

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is not only educational learning but also human development. "SEL is a process where young people and adults acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022, Fundamentals of SEL). SEL addresses inequality in various forms and gives young people and adults ways to empower themselves. With this knowledge and skills, these young people and adults can create schools that are thriving and communities that are safe and healthy. SEL focuses on five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. During self-awareness, the young person or adult is identifying emotions, social and cultural identity, recognizing strengths,

growth mindset, self-efficacy, examining bias, and a sense of purpose. During self-management, they learn emotion regulation, impulse control, stress management, self-discipline and motivation, perseverance, goal setting, organizational skills, and initiative and agency. During social awareness, the following occurs: perspective-taking, empathy, compassion, expressing gratitude, appreciating diversity, identifying social norms and demands, and creating a sense of belonging. Relationship skills are learning communication, cultural competence, building relationships, teamwork and working cooperatively, resolving conflicts, helping, seeking help, leadership, and standing up for the rights of others. In the fifth area of responsible decision-making, they are demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness, identifying and solving problems, analyzing situations and consequences, ethical responsibility, and reflecting on one's role to promote individual and collective well-being. SEL can be seen in the classroom, school, families, and communities. SEL has ten competencies that can be seen in schools and the communities: explicit SEL instruction, SEL integrated with academic instruction, youth voice and engagement, supportive school and classroom climate, focus on adult SEL, supportive discipline, a continuum of integrated supports, authentic family partnerships, aligned community partnerships, systems for continuous improvement (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022).

Capturing Kid's Hearts

Capturing Kid's Hearts is a social and emotional learning program developed by Flip Flippen. Capturing Kid's Hearts aims to grow positive relationships between students and educators, improving behavior and academic outcomes (Flippen Group, 2022). Social and emotional learning is a developmental program where children and adults successfully obtain and utilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes to help control their reactions, empathize, set and

achieve goals, build deeper relationships, and make responsible decisions at home, school, and in the community. Well-implemented social and emotional learning programs will affect the school's environment. These programs equip students with the ability to make social and emotional decisions. Overall, educators should be equipped with the right resources to build relationships with students to improve academically and decrease negative behaviors (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022; Ohrt et al., 2021).

Capturing Kid's Hearts aims to produce high-performing schools, support school and individual behavior goals, and increase school unity. The anticipated outcome of this program is strong relationships between the teacher and student and to teach the student how to communicate and respond to struggle positively (Flippen Group, 2022). The goal of Capturing Kid's Hearts is to help good teachers improve by equipping them with tools to build meaningful relationships with their students, provide a safe environment in which to learn and develop a dialogue for team building. The Capturing Kid's Hearts model includes the teaching model EXCEL. EXCEL is engage, explore, communicate, empower, and launch. During *engage*, the teacher is to meet and greet each student at the door, teaching them social skills. Next, the teacher will *explore* the needs of others by implementing "good things." During good things, the teacher will take three to five minutes to allow students to share one good thing that has happened in their life. During *communicate*, the teacher will implement the social contract, develop self-managing skills, and use non-verbal signals to manage behavior. Finally, *launch* is at the end of the class period. *Launch* is a meaningful way to end each class period. For example, the end of the period could be a motto everyone recites or a different powerful message from the teacher each day. (Flippen Group, 2022).

Relationship Centered Learning

Relationship centered learning (RCL) was developed and maintained by a group of educators and administrators. They believed in a relationship first approach in the classroom. They feel you need to get to know your students first. This will help the teacher to build and sustain relationships in the classroom. RCL is a holistic approach to prevent negative behaviors and use restorative practices utilizing five components. The five components are: interpersonal communication, whole group community sharing, positive interaction experiences, emotional inventory instrument and social contract development. Positive interaction experience is a fun, positive, and genuine time of interaction that will intentionally build healthier and more positive environments. Interpersonal communication is an opportunity for individuals to share and discover about one another in a small group setting. Whole-group community sharing is a process in the classroom when the entire classroom shares experiences with one another. Social contract development is a whole classroom approach to setting norms of how to treat each other in the classroom. Emotional inventory instrument is a gauge for the teacher to measure the current social and emotional state of the student (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2022).

An example of interpersonal communication is a sixty second relate break. A sixty second relate break can take place anytime during the class. During a sixty second relate break, the teacher will tell the students they have sixty seconds to answer a question with their shoulder partner. The teacher will ask a question, such as, “what is your favorite comic hero?” At that time the students turn to their shoulder partner and discuss the question, while the teacher sets the timer. The teacher should be walking around the classroom to hear the students participating. When the time goes off, the teacher answers the question for the students. An example of whole

group community sharing is a two-minute connection. The teacher will ask the students to get up and form a circle. The teacher will ask a question, such as, “what is your favorite show on Netflix?” The teacher will start the cycle first with his/her answer. Then the teacher will turn his/her head to the student next to him/her as a sign that it is their time to answer. Each student will answer the question until it gets back to the teacher. Then the teacher will have all the students go back to their desk. This will give the class the opportunity to know more about each student. An example of positive interaction experiences in the classroom is a ninety second spark. The ninety second spark has two parts to it. The first part is the teacher is visible at the door and greets every student. When the teacher enters the classroom, they will begin the second part of the ninety second spark. The teacher will have every student get up and greet at least three students with a high five or other greeting. This experience will send positive energy throughout the classroom. The social contract is developed during the first weeks of school. The students collaboratively develop goals for each section of the contract: teacher to student, student to teacher and student to student. During treatment agreement, each week the teacher will remind the students of one of the goals they developed for the contract. The class will concentrate on that goal for a week, then move to another goal for the next week. This keeps the contract alive, and it does not die hanging on the wall and never being addressed again after the initial collaboration (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2022).

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework that works with data and instruction. This is used in a MTSS students’ academic, emotional and behavior needs. The framework is composed of four components: screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision. The screening is conducted three times a year. This

screening is used to identify students that may be at risk and need support: academically, socially, emotionally, or even behavior support. Progress monitoring is the next component. Progress monitoring will assess performance. Tools and processes are used to verify improvement and/or response to intervention. These tools are also used to assess the effectiveness of instruction, interventions and supports. The next component is multi-level prevention system. The multi-level prevention system is composed of three tiers. Tier one is classroom instruction and support for all students. Tier two targets the students that have gaps in skills. Tier three will provide more intensive support usually in small groups. The fourth component is data-based decision making. During this component the team will make decision by analyzing data. The team will solve problems and make decisions about instruction, intervention, implementation, and disability identification.

Implementation of MTSS is accomplished in three phases: phase one plan for success, phase two implement, and phase three sustain and expand. During phase one a planning team needs to be established. This team needs to incorporate general education teachers, special education teachers, and administration. The team needs to set goals. They also need to determine which area of academics to focus on, math, literacy, reading, etc. The team needs a buy in from all involved. If MTSS is district wide, they should have a district level MTSS team to answer any questions at the school level. The team will need to determine how to collect the data and how they are going to use it. The team also needs to assure tier one supports are strong. An example of tier one supports could be the following: high quality academic core instruction, social-emotional learning in curriculum and assessment, strong student and teacher relationships, systems to promote positive behavior, and equitable and inclusive school climate. The MTSS teams need to have resources for the educators. During phase two, implementation, faculty and

staff will continue to attend professional development training. This phase will provide coaching supports such as Response to Intervention (RtI), PBIS, MTSS. Coaching can take place in different ways. There can be one on one coaching, peer to peer coaching, team teacher coaching, system coaching for everyone. Phase three is sustain and expand. During this phase it is very important to read and head the feedback given by teachers, coaches, teachers, paraprofessionals, and leaders. These are the ones that are implementing the program and know what is going well and what needs to be changed. The team needs to convene and decide which problems needs to be addressed first. This last phase is ever going. The team will need to revisit the feedback and decide what needs to be changed based on what is working and what is not for their school. (American Institutes for Research, 2023).

Possible Solutions

Schools need to develop strategies to use schoolwide (Long, Renshaw, Camarota, 2018; Long, Sanetti et al., 2018; Tan et al., 2021). These strategies could be restorative justice (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016), UDL (CAST, 2022), PBIS (Center on PBIS, 2022), SEL (Collaboration for academic, social and emotional learning, 2022), CKH (Flippen Group, 2022), RCL (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2022), or MTSS (American Institutes for Research, 2023). There must be strategies for disabled and non-disabled students (Tegtmejer, 2019). Professional development must be developed to teach each teacher the strategies to be implemented (Anyon, Gregory et al., 2016; Poduska & Kurki, 2014).

Classroom Management

Classroom management involves teachers teaching classroom procedures to create a climate that enhances learning. The climate needs to address students' negative behaviors and promote good behaviors. Teachers should focus on the positive rather than be reactive toward the

negative behaviors. Teachers should have a structure set up in their classroom that is predictable for the students. Teachers should have a set of classroom expectations and procedures that all students have been taught. Teachers should also help teach self-regulation to the students through consistent feedback from positive and negative behaviors. According to Long, Renshaw, Camarota (2018), research has proven that behavioral interventions have significantly reduced disruptive behavior compared to non-behavioral interventions.

One behavior intervention that teachers use is the good behavior game. Teachers will split the class into two groups. The group with the lowest points will get a prize at the end of the game. If both groups are below a certain number, the entire class will be rewarded. The classroom teacher will set the parameters of the game for the class. Then, the class will be taught which behavior will be awarded a point. When students demonstrate the desired behavior, their group wins the point (Long, Renshaw, Camarota, 2018).

Slaten et al. (2015) had a different approach to classroom management than others. They implemented a social and emotional learning program in an urban alternative school. They focused on pedagogy, relationships, community involvement, and school environment. They personalized learning in groups and individually if necessary. They had a group where the high school girls would come together and discuss their problems.

Professional Development

Teacher professional development is continuing education for teachers, which may be either formal or informal. Formal professional development can be through courses, conferences, retreats, seminars, and workshops. Informal professional development can be independent research, peer learning initiatives, or talking to a colleague. Professional development can occur on a district, school, or individual classroom level. Professional development boosts student

learning, encourages new teachers' success, and increases educators' growth mindset (Kampen, 2019).

Slaten et al. (2015) reported the teachers in their study had opportunities to attend professional development to teach them about the social aspects of the community and students enrolled in their school. Tan et al. (2021) reported teachers should be trained on how to create norms in the classroom and classroom expectations. Such training can help with classroom management and develop a healthy classroom climate. Administrators should have training for teachers throughout the year to help them with difficult behavior in the classroom.

Alternate Discipline

Alternate discipline is a type of discipline to use in schools rather than removing the student from the classroom or the school. A type of alternate discipline is restorative justice, positive behavior intervention and supports, and social and emotional learning (Mergler, et al., 2014).

Ohrt et al. (2020) adopted a social and emotional learning program at an alternative school in the southeastern United States. Because students' attendance is low at most alternative schools, only two of the original 32 participants completed the program. Slaten et al. (2015) had different results. After the school on which they reported implemented the social and emotional learning strategies, their students recovered many of their credits and returned to traditional school. The students felt heard. The school would have talking circles with the teachers and students participating; all participants were important.

School Wide Strategies

Slaten et al. (2015) reported their research findings of an urban alternative school that implemented a social and emotional learning program in their school. This program was adapted

and implemented by the administration and teachers schoolwide. The administration and teachers knew it was important for each classroom to have a climate of respect. They felt it was important for the students to feel they could talk to any of their teachers about their issues. The administration and teachers also saw it was important for them to help their students heal from the wounds and hurts of their past. The school vision was explained to the staff and teachers. All the teachers were on board and had the vision of the administration.

Tan et al. (2021) wrote discipline procedures and policies need to be a schoolwide process. They wrote the school needs to determine what policies and procedures are best for their school. They need to ensure the students have a safe and positive learning environment. Next, they need to make sure the discipline policies are developed to help the students grow as a person. Then, when the entire campus is on board, they can see which students need more behavioral support than others.

Schoolwide rules

Schoolwide rules should align with the expectations of the school. They should be measurable and observable. They need to clarify the behaviors for each specific setting and no more than five per setting. They need to be positively stated. They need to be supportive of academic achievement. They need to be applicable to all students. They need to be contextually/culturally appropriate (example, age, grade level, language). The rules need to be agreed upon by at least 80% of all faculty and staff. The rules need to be communicated to the stakeholders of the school, families, community members, district administrators (REACH MS, n.d.).

According to Valenti and Kerr (2015) there are several steps to develop and implement schoolwide rules. Valenti and Kerr started with surveys of rules for the staff and faculty. First,

they suggest having a staff meeting to explain the survey importance of the schoolwide rules. Next make sure all staff and faculty know the surveys are anonymous. They recommend showing a sample bar graph from the data. After all the data are gathered from the surveys have another staff meeting to discuss the data. Make sure to have copies of the data for all the staff to see or project so everyone will have access to it. While the staff is discussing the importance of rules let them know if a rule received a low score that means the staff did not rank it of high importance and it can be removed from the rule list that is being compiled. If staff cannot come up with a list of rules as one big group, break into small groups and assign different areas to each group. Once the staff has all the rules compiled, place them all on the wall and let the staff look at them like a gallery walk for approval. This will be the rules the school will follow schoolwide. If the school has many teachers leave or retire and an influx of new teacher with new personalities, the process will need to be revisited. Also, the original teachers may have a different insight about the rules since they have been using them in the classroom.

Strategies for Students with Special Needs

A child has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age. They may have problems with schoolwork, communication or behavior (Nidirect government services, n.d.).

According to Dawes (2011), most disruptions in the classroom are caused by special education students. Most of these students have discipline addressed within their individual education plan (IEP) (Dawes, 2011). Many students are diagnosed with ADHD. These students make errors in classwork, fail to follow directions, do not always finish their work, leave their seats, blurt out, and answer questions before the teacher is finished asking them. ADHD students must have structure and need to be managed closely. When a student with learning disabilities

disrupts the classroom, addressing it in front of the class is not productive. Addressing such students will distract the rest of the students even more than the initial disruption. The teacher will need to determine what kind of disruption this was. Does the disruption warrant a reprimand, a long talk, or does it need to be ignored? According to Tegtmejer's (2019) study, the teachers did not have special strategies for special needs students. The strategies used in the classroom would have been used for any student. One strategy that would benefit special needs students is having rules and expectations in written form. Tegtmejer wrote when the ADHD student saw the rules and expectations on the wall, they were more apt to follow them. According to Dawes schools have two types of discipline rules to follow, those for the mainstream students and those for the Special education Students.

Theoretical Framework

This research is a theoretical framework of behaviorism. According to Stadden (2014), behaviorism taught us rewards and punishment through animal experimentation. According to Skinner (1976), many behaviorists disregard genetics. They feel the behavior of man is learned. Watson states he could turn any infant into "a doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant chief, and even a beggarman or thief." (Skinner, 1976, n.p.). Behaviorism is also known as the stimulus-response theory. Some people refer to this theory as the "practice makes perfect" theory. Behavior changes through conditioning, which is through reinforcement and punishment. (Clark, 2018; Moore, 2011).

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning is conditioning in which the conditioned stimulus, such as the sound of a bell, is paired with and precedes the unconditioned stimulus, such as the sight of food, until the conditioned stimulus alone is sufficient to elicit the response, such as salivation in a dog

(Merriam-Webster, 2022a). Ivan Pavlov was a Russian physiologist that studied learning behavior. This behavior was called classical conditioning. He is known for the study called Pavlov's dogs (Clark, 2018; Malone & Cruchon, 2001; Stadden, 2014).

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning is conditioning in which a rewarding or reinforcing stimulus follows the desired behavior or increasingly closer approximations to it. (Merriam-Webster, 2022b). For example, Edward Thorndike used cats and puzzle boxes. The cat had to press a lever to get out of the box. Later this type of trial was called "reinforcements" and "punishments." John Watson felt he could control behavior. Watson wanted to switch the study of psychology from the mind to behavior. Watson's approach became known as behaviorism. However, B. F. Skinner, in his experiments with rats in boxes, provided food to the rats when the rat hit the lever. His research became known as reinforcement (Clark, 2018; Moore, 2011; Stadden, 2014).

Behaviorism is the science of understanding behavior (Moore, 2011). According to Malone and Cruchon (2001), behavior is rule-governed rather than based on contingencies. They said people learn from other people. They do not have to experience every aspect of life to understand it. They learn from those around them. According to Clark (2018), teachers use behaviorism in their classrooms via lecturing, classroom management, rewards, and punishments, recalling facts, and completing drill and practice exercises.

Summary

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County

Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presented the Narrative Review and Theoretical Framework.

Chapter Three: Procedures

Overview

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was that the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presents the Interview Procedures, Focus Group Procedures, Survey Procedures, and Summary.

Interview Procedures

The first approach used to collect data in this study was semi-structured interviews. The questions were written based on scholarly literature and specific topics based on the research problem. This approach would allow each teacher to provide information on the problem based on their experience as an educator. The interviews helped to solve the problem of increasing referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. There are five teachers at the Escambia County Alternative School. All five teachers participated in the interviews. There is one teacher for each of the core classes, which are Science, Math, Social Studies, and English. Additionally, there is one Special Education teacher. These participants were chosen because they were the only teachers at the school.

Interviews were conducted off campus. Each interview was one-on-one and conducted over the phone. Each participant was given a choice of date and time to conduct each interview to be at the participant's convenience. Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes and was recorded. Each recording was transcribed following each interview for analysis.

Once the interviews were transcribed, they were coded to determine categories and themes from each participant's response. Coding and categorization are appropriate data analyses. This method allowed each answer from the participant to be lined with the appropriate literature (Claxton & Michael, 2021). Coding allowed themes to be identified. To answer the central research question, How can the problem of increased referrals be solved at the Escambia County Alternative School?, data were collected qualitatively through ten semi-structured interview questions. After consent, the participants were asked the following ten interview questions.

Interview Questions

1. Describe the current referral process at the Escambia County Alternative School.

The purpose of this question was to see if the Escambia County Alternative School has a process for a referral or if each teacher is relied upon to use their own process. Each school should have a discipline referral process, and each teacher should know the process before writing a referral (REACH MS, n.d.).

2. Describe how faculty meetings are used to incorporate alternative strategies.

The purpose of this question was to see if the administrator is addressing the strategies in faculty meetings. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018), all teachers should be taught classroom management expectations and writing referrals.

3. Describe your referral process?

The purpose of this question is to see if each teacher uses the same process. Some teachers are quick to write referrals and others give many warnings. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018) all teachers should be taught a referral process.

4. Describe your classroom management and how it reduces the number of discipline referrals.

The purpose of this question is to get the teacher thinking about their strategies and if they are working. Not all strategies work for all teachers. According to Long, Renshaw, Camarota (2018), there are many strategies teachers can use to control behavior in the classroom.

5. What classroom strategies could be used to decrease the referrals at the Escambia County alternative school?

The purpose of this question was to find strategies that will decrease bad behavior and therefore decrease discipline referrals. The good behavior game (GBG) is a method of behavior management. The game teaches children how to be students and perform student roles successfully. GBG is a team-based classroom behavior management strategy that helps children master the role of student and succeed at the classroom's key demands, including paying attention and working well with others. Through GBG, children work together to create a positive learning environment for all students by monitoring their own behavior and that of their classmates. As a universal preventive intervention, the focus of GBG is on strengthening the classroom environment and socializing children to the role of student (Poduska & Kurki, 2014).

6. How could your strategies be taught to other teachers and used schoolwide?

The purpose of this question was to see how the strategies can be used by more than one teacher, even the entire school. The teacher and students work together to define classroom rules and the corresponding behavioral expectations (Poduska & Kurki, 2014).

7. What classroom management strategies would you use for a student with special needs?

The purpose of this question was to see if the strategies for ADHD students are different from those of non-disability students. ADHD students spend more time engaged in disruptive behaviors that interfere with their tasks of completing assignments. ADHD students are 2-5 times more likely to engage in off-task behavior. (Tegtmejer, 2019).

8. Capturing Kids Hearts reports an increase in grades and a decrease in bad behavior. What changes in grades and behavior students have you noticed since the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts?

The purpose of this question is to see if there has been a change in some students at the alternative school after the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts. According to The Flippen Group (2022), grades should increase, and behavior decrease after implementing Capturing Kids Hearts.

9. Capturing Kids Hearts data also show that student attendance to school increases after the implementation of their program. What changes to attendance have you seen?

The purpose of this question is to see if there has been a change in some students at the alternative school after the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts. According to The Flippen Group (2022), truancy decreases after implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts.

10. The current data shows that when teachers are consistent with their discipline, the number of discipline referrals will decrease. How has your consistency of discipline in your classroom affected the number of referrals you write?

The purpose of this question is to see if the teacher is more aware and consistent with their discipline and rules. According to the Flippen Group (2022), teachers are more consistent with rules and therefore have a decrease in disciplinary referral.

Focus Group Procedures

The second approach used to collect data for this study was a single-focus group. This approach allowed for ten pre-set focus group questions to be presented synchronously. The participants were the five teachers and one of the school's administrators. The focus group let the

researcher hear how each teacher and the administration would solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School.

The focus group was conducted via Google meet. Each teacher and the administrator signed on from different locations. The Google meet was recorded for later analysis. All participants had their video cameras on to enable me to take note of facial expressions and body language. The focus group lasted one hour and 15 minutes. The meeting recording was promptly transcribed for data analysis after the meeting.

Once the focus group interviews were transcribed, they were coded to determine categories and themes from each participant's response. Coding and categorization are appropriate data analyses. This method allowed each answer from the participant to be lined with the appropriate literature (Claxton & Michael, 2021). Coding allowed themes to be identified. To answer the central research question, How can the problem of increased referrals be solved at the Escambia County Alternative School?, data were collected qualitatively through ten semi-structured interview questions. After consent, the participants were asked the following 11 interview questions.

Focus Group Questions

1. What is the referral process at the Escambia County Alternative School?

The purpose of this question was to see if the Escambia County Alternative School has a process for a referral or does each teacher do their own process. Each school should have a discipline referral process, and each teacher should know the process before writing a referral (REACH MS, n.d.).

2. Which referral process is used in each classroom by the teachers?

The purpose of this question was to see if every teacher uses the same referral process. According to Arcia (2006), principals are responsible for each teacher understanding the referral process.

3. If every teacher is not using the same process, what referral process would each teacher agree to use?

The purpose of this question was to have every teacher work together to develop a referral process they will begin implementing in their classroom. Each school should have a discipline referral process, and each teacher should know the process before writing a referral (REACH MS, n.d.).

4. If all teachers used the same referral process, how would this impact the teachers?

Long, Renshaw, Camarota (2018) showed students of all ages were responsive to all their teachers using the same classroom management/referral process and the teacher would have more time to teach and less time with discipline.

5. If all teachers used the same referral process, how would this impact the students?

Long, Renshaw, Camarota (2018) showed students of all ages were responsive to all their teachers using the same classroom management/referral process.

6. What should the referral process be for students with disabilities?

The purpose of this question was to see if there is a separate procedure for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are more likely to get off task than those without disabilities. According to Tegtmejer (2019) and Dawes (2011) teachers should have different strategies in place for students with disabilities. Many of the strategies used for students with disabilities will help the non-disability students also.

7. What classroom strategies could be used to decrease the referrals at the Escambia County

Alternative School?

The purpose of this question was to find strategies that will decrease bad behavior and decrease discipline referrals. According to Poduska and Kurki (2014), teachers must use strategies to help with classroom management.

8. What strategies do teachers use in their classrooms to assist with classroom management?

The purpose of this question was to see if any strategies are used across the board at school. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018), classroom behavior is better when all teachers use the same strategies.

9. How could the same strategies for classroom management schoolwide help the students?

The purpose of this question was to see if any strategies are used across the board at school. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018), effective classroom management can lead to improved behavior for the student, then the student can return to their home school.

10. How could the same strategies for classroom management schoolwide help the teachers?

The purpose of this question was to see if any strategies are used across the board at school. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018), if every teacher used the same classroom management, they would be creating an environment for learning. Teachers need to have good classroom management as well as promote engagement from the students.

11. As a group how would you solve the problem of increased office discipline referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School?

The purpose of this question is to get the focus group to think of possible solutions for the problem. Through the focus group questions they were asked about a referral process. Each school should have a discipline referral process, and each teacher should know the process before writing a referral (REACH MS, n.d.). According to Arcia (2006), principals are

responsible for each teacher understanding the referral process. Through the focus group questions, teachers were also asked about classroom management styles. Long, Renshaw, Camarota (2018) showed students of all ages were responsive to all their teachers using the same classroom management/referral process and the teacher would have more time to teach and less time with discipline. Through these questions the focus group was asked questions about different strategies to use in the classroom. Teachers must use strategies to help with classroom management (Poduska and Kurki, 2014). Classroom behavior is better when all teachers use the same strategies. Effective classroom management can lead to improved behavior for the student, then the student can return to their home school. If every teacher used the same classroom management (strategies), they would be creating an environment for learning. Teachers need to have good classroom management as well as promote engagement from the students (Long, Sanetti et al., 2018).

Survey Procedures

The third approach used to collect data was a survey. This approach investigated the student's perspective of the referral process and the rules at The Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. To collect data, a closed-ended Likert scale survey was administered electronically using Survey Monkey, an internet-based program. A quantitative survey is an appropriate approach for data collection for this study since it provides participants with the opportunity to have one and only one answer to each question while ensuring that there is, in fact, an answer to every question (Claxton & Michael, 2021).

The participants of the survey included sixteen students from the school, some current and some have returned to their home school. These participants were chosen at random. Before contacting any student, the researcher received verbal and/or written parental permission to

conduct the survey. All participants received an email with instructions concerning how to fill out the survey. The participants were given a two-week window to fill out the survey. If a participant needed more time, an arrangement was made on a case-by-case basis. The results were analyzed by tallying the number of times each answer was chosen by each participant on a question-by-question process. An average score for each question based on the answers from all participants were also tallied. The survey included five demographic questions and 12 questions composed based the peer reviewed literature. The questions were answered by the participants using a five-point Likert scale.

Demographic Questions:

Instructions: Choose the best response for each prompt below.

1. Which category best describes your age in years?

- 10-11
- 12-13
- 14-15
- 16-17
- 18 or older

2. What is your race?

- White
- Black/African American
- Native American/Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races
- Other

3. What is your gender?

- Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to say
4. What grade are you in?
- 5th or 6th
 - 7th or 8th
 - 9th or 10th
 - 11th or 12th
5. Which school did you attend before being assigned to The Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama?
- Flomaton
 - Brewton
 - Atmore
 - Pollard-McCall

Survey Questions:

1. How many days were you assigned to The Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama?
- 10 or less
 - 11 to 20
 - 21 to 30
 - 31 to 40
 - 41 to 50
 - More than 50

The purpose of this question is to see how many days the student was assigned to the alternative school. According to Allman and Slate (2011) the average alternative school stay is from 30 to 45 days.

2. What action had you assigned to The Escambia County Alternative School?

- Fighting
- Weapon possession
- Drugs/alcohol
- Behavior/referrals
- Other

The purpose of this question is to see why the students assigned to the Escambia County Alternative School were assigned there. According to Gut and McLaughlin (2012) the major reasons students are assigned to an alternative setting is: fighting, threat/intimidation, tobacco, and weapons.

3. In the previous question you marked the action that had you assigned to the alternative school. While at The Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, I continued this action.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the student was continuing the bad behavior that sent him or her to the alternative school. According to Gut and McLaughlin (2012) the student's behavior does improve while attending an alternative school.

4. Discipline is stricter at the alternative school than at my home school.

5	4	3	2	1
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Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the students feel the discipline is stricter at the alternative school than at their home school. According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018) teacher need to implement management strategies and more intensive intervention that the students in these schools need.

5. My academics have improved since I have been at The Escambia County Alternative School.

5 4 3 2 1
 Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Students that are assigned to an alternative school are already at-risk students. According to the Flippen Group (2022) academics should increase after implementing Capturing Kids Hearts, but Welsh (2022) reported a decrease in academics once a student is placed in an alternative setting.

6. My referrals have decreased since I have been at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama.

5 4 3 2 1
 Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Students that are assigned to an alternative setting, in most cases, have already received many referrals at their home school. According to Tan et al. (2021) students that continuously receive referrals are at a higher risk of school failure.

7. All of the teachers at the Escambia County Alternative School use the same rules.

5 4 3 2 1
 Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the students see the teachers all using the same rules and following the same rules. According to Tan et al. (2021) school wide methods are very productive in addressing student disciplinary issues.

8. All of the teachers at The Escambia County Alternative School use the same discipline strategies in the classroom.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the teachers use the same strategies in the classroom. According to Gregory and Ripski (2008), teachers need to learn to maintain order, use different strategies, and maintain boundaries.

9. The principal is present and willing to answer any concerns I have.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the students feel they can talk to the principal or do they feel she is off limits to them. According to Gregory and Ripski (2008), a relational approach can help both teachers and administration with the cooperation of the students.

10. My behavior has changed because of my assignment to The Escambia County Alternative School.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The purpose of this question is to see if the student has changed their behavior. Gut and McLaughlin (2012) reported a decrease in behaviors after the students attended the alternative program for their district.

11. My behavior would change leading to less referrals if every teacher used the same referral process.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Each school should have a discipline referral process, and each teacher should know the process before writing a referral (REACH MS, n.d.). According to Arcia (2006), principals are responsible for each teacher understanding the referral process.

12. My behavior would change leading to less referrals if every teacher used the same classroom management style.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

According to Long, Sanetti et al. (2018), effective classroom management can lead to improved behavior for the student, then the student can return to their home school.

Summary

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presented the Interview Procedures, Focus Group Procedures, and Survey Procedures.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was that the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presents the Interview Findings, Focus Group Findings, and Survey Findings.

Interview Findings

The first approach of this applied research study was interviews. The semi-structured interviews comprised 10 questions and were conducted individually for each participant. This approach allowed each teacher to provide information on the problem based on their experience as an educator. The interviews helped to solve the problem of increasing referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Interviews were conducted off-campus. Each interview was one-on-one and conducted over the phone. Each participant was given a choice of date and time to conduct each interview at their convenience. There were five teachers at the Escambia County Alternative School. All five teachers participated in the interviews. There was one teacher for each of the core classes, science, math, social studies, and English. Additionally, there was one special education teacher. These participants were chosen because they were the only teachers at the school. Prior to beginning each interview, a summary of the purpose of the research was explained. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was recorded. Each recording was transcribed following each interview for data analysis.

Interview Descriptions of Participants

Participant One had 25 years of teaching special education. She had taught in high school, middle school, and elementary school special education programs. She had been with the Escambia County School District for 10 years and two years with the Escambia County Alternative School.

Participant Two had 27 years of experience teaching English and Reading. She had taught various grades over the years, from sixth to 12th grade. She had been with the Escambia County School District for 20 years and three years with the Escambia County Alternative School.

Participant Three had eight years of experience teaching Science. She has taught mostly middle school, seventh and eighth grade. She had been with the Escambia County School District for five years and the Escambia County Alternative School for three years.

Participant Four had eight years teaching history. She started teaching history for the Star Academy accelerated program. This program helps overaged students get back on track with their peers by completing two grades in one year. She started teaching at the Escambia County Alternative School when the two programs were combined. She had been with the Escambia County Alternative School for six years and the Escambia County School district for all eight years of teaching.

Participant Five had been teaching math for 10 years. She started teaching algebra 1 and geometry at the high school level. She had been with the Escambia County School District for seven years at the Escambia County Alternative School. She started an administration program and brought insight to the interview from the administrative perspective.

Interview Results

The interviews were conducted with the five teachers at the Escambia County Alternative School. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were coded to determine categories and themes from each participant's response. Coding and categorization are appropriate data analyses. This method allowed each answer from the participant to be lined with the appropriate literature (Claxton & Michael, 2021). Coding allowed themes to be identified. Table 1 shows the themes that were identified.

Table 1

Codes and Themes from Interview Data

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Participants' Quotes
Teacher behavior	Positive	"Teachers need to be positive and have a positive reinforcement for the students."
	Be calm	"Always be calm in the classroom."
	Do not yell	"Always do your best not to yell in the classroom."
	Keep your eyes on the kids	"Always know what the students are doing. Keep your eyes on the kids."
	Walk around	"Walk around the classroom. Do not just sit at your desk."
Referral Process	Warning	"Always give the student a warning first."
	Talk	"Try to talk and reason with the student."
	Take away break	"If the students continue the bad behavior take something away, like their break."
	Referral	"If the bad behavior continues, you have to write them up."
Procedures	Seating arrangement	"Make sure the students sit in their assigned seats every day."
	Classroom management	"Every teacher must have and use their classroom management skills."

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Participants' Quotes
	Know their behavior	"Make sure you know the behavior of the students and their personalities."
	Walk around	"Always walk around the classroom."
	Do not talk	"Do not allow the students to talk."
	Keep your eyes on the kids	"Keep your eyes on the kids at all times."
	Proximity	"Check the proximity of students."
	Mood Changes	"Be aware of mood changes."
	Rules	"Make sure the students know our rules."
	Quiet	"Keep the students quiet."
	Task	"Make sure the students are on task at all times."
	Schedule	"Make sure you are following the schedule for bathroom times and classroom breaks."
Strategies	Consistency	"You have to be consistent with every student every day."
	Positive	"Give incentives for positive behavior."
	Be calm	"Have a calm climate in your classroom."
	Proximity	"Check the proximity of students. You do not want personalities to clash or triggers to go off."
Outcomes	Attendance	"Attendance did improve after the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts."
	Grades	"Students grades have increased while attending the alternative school."
	Behavior	"Behavior as a whole has not been better, but it has been better for individual students."
	P.E.	"If I take away their P.E. the behavior gets better."
	Rapport with student	"The better rapport I have with a student, the better their behavior."

Themes were noted through coding. A word search was completed, and the results can be found in the Themes and Frequency Codes from Interview Data in Table 2.

Table 2*Themes and Frequency Codes from Interview Data*

Themes	Code Word/Phrases	Occurrences Across Data
Teacher Behavior	Positive	5
	Be calm	2
	Do not yell	2
	Keep your eyes on the kids	5
	Walk around	5
Referral Process	Warning	4
	Talk	5
	Take away break	5
	Referral	5
Procedures	Seating Arrangement	7
	Classroom Management	5
	Know their behavior	2
	Walk around	20
	Do not talk	13
	Keep your eyes on the kids	15
	Proximity	15
	Mood changes	3
	Rules	5
	Quiet	5
	Task	4
	Schedule	2
Strategies	Consistency	7
	Positive	15
	Be calm	4
	Proximity	15
Outcomes	Attendance	5
	Grades	5
	Behavior	5
	P.E.	15

Themes	Code Word/Phrases	Occurrences Across Data
	Rapport with students	8

Focus Group Findings

The second approach used to collect data for this study was a focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to collect data to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. This approach allowed for 11 pre-set focus group questions to be presented synchronously. The focus group was conducted via Google meet. The Google meet was recorded for later analysis. All participants had their video cameras on to enable the researcher to take note of facial expressions and body language. The focus group lasted one hour and 15 minutes. The meeting recording was promptly transcribed for data analysis after the meeting. The participants included all five teachers and one school administrator. All the participants are involved with referrals and would contribute great information to improve the process.

Focus Group Description of Participants

Participant One had 25 years of teaching in the classroom. She had taught in high school, middle school, and elementary school. She had been with the Escambia County School District for 10 years and two years with the Escambia County Alternative School.

Participant Two had 27 years of experience teaching in the classroom. She had taught various grades over the years from sixth to 12th grade. She had been with the Escambia County School District for 20 years and three years with the Escambia County Alternative School.

Participant Three had eight years of experience teaching in the classroom. She has taught mostly middle school. She had been with the Escambia County School District for five years and the Escambia County Alternative School for three years.

Participant Four had eight years of teaching in the classroom. She had eight years of experience teaching in alternative programs. She had been with the Escambia County Alternative School for six years and the Escambia County School district for all eight years of teaching.

Participant Five had been teaching for 10 years. She started out teaching at the high school level. She had been with the Escambia County School District for seven years at the Escambia County Alternative School. She has started an administration program and brought insight to the interview from the administrative perspective.

Participant Six has been in education for 24 years. She was a classroom teacher for 17 years and has been in administration for six years. She has been with Escambia County for all 24 years of education.

Focus Group Results

The focus group was conducted with five classroom teachers and one administrator via google meet to find codes and themes related to increased referrals at the school. Once the focus group interviews were transcribed, they were coded to determine categories and themes from each participant's response. Coding and categorization are appropriate data analyses. This method allowed each answer from the participant to be lined with the appropriate literature (Claxton & Michael, 2021). Coding allowed themes to be identified. As reported in Table 3, various qualitative data themes were identified.

Table 3

Codes and Themes from Focus Group Data

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Participants' Quotes
Referral Process	Warning	"You must give the student a warning."
	Talk	"Talk to the student about their behavior."

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Participants' Quotes
Strategies	Discipline Essay	"If the student does not heed the warning and the talk, have them write a discipline essay."
	Behavior Intervention	"If the student still does not behave, take something away, like their break."
	Referral/Principal	"When taking their break away does not work, write them up or send them to the principal."
	Contract	"We should have a classroom contract and keep it alive all year long."
	Walk around	"We should walk around the classroom to know what the students are doing at all times."
	Watch	"We should be watching and analyzing the students' moods. We need to know what their next move is."
	Hand gestures	"We could use hand gestures in the classroom."
Schoolwide	Rules	"If we all had and followed the same rules, then the students would know what to expect in every classroom."
	Strategies	"The students would act the same in every classroom if every teacher used. The same strategies."
	Students with disabilities	"All teachers should know what is in each IEP and follow the IEP for the student."

Themes were noted through coding. A word search was completed, and the results can be found in the Themes and Frequency Codes from Focus Group Data in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes and Frequency Codes from Focus Group Data

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Occurrences across data
Referral Process	Warning	3
	Talk	3

Themes	Code Words/Phrases	Occurrences across data
Strategies	Discipline Essay	3
	Behavior Intervention	5
	Referral/Principal	4
	Contract	3
	Walk around	1
	Watch	2
Schoolwide	Hand gestures	2
	Rules	3
	Strategies	4
	Students with disabilities	2

Survey Findings

The third approach used to collect data was a survey. This approach investigated the student's perspective of the referral process and the rules at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. To collect data, a closed-ended Likert scale survey was administered electronically using Google Forms, an internet-based program. The survey participants included 16 students from the school, some current and some who have returned to their home school. These participants were chosen at random. Before contacting any student, the researcher received verbal and/or written parental permission to conduct the survey. All participants received an email or text with instructions on completing the survey. The participants were given a two-week window to fill out the survey. If a participant needed more time, an arrangement was made on a case-by-case basis.

Survey Description of Participants

Participants of the survey included 16 students from the school, some current and some who have returned to their home school. Four participants were in the 12-13 age group, five participants were in the 14-15 age group, six participants were in the 16-17 age group, and one

participant was 18 or older. Nine participants were Black/African American, and seven participants were white. Eleven of the participants were male and five of the participants were female. Two of the participants were in the fifth or sixth grade, four of the participants were in the seventh or eighth grade, six of the participants were in the ninth or 10th grade, and four of the participants were in the 11th or 12th grade.

Survey Results

Surveys were conducted with 16 students from the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. Some were current students, and some were sent back to their home school. For questions one and two the results were analyzed and graphed. The results of the remaining questions were analyzed by tallying the number of times each participant chose each answer on a question-by-question process. An average score for each question based on the answers from all participants were also tallied. Then a frequency and mean table was created to display the frequency and mean of the Likert scale responses.

Figure 1

Question 1 Survey Response

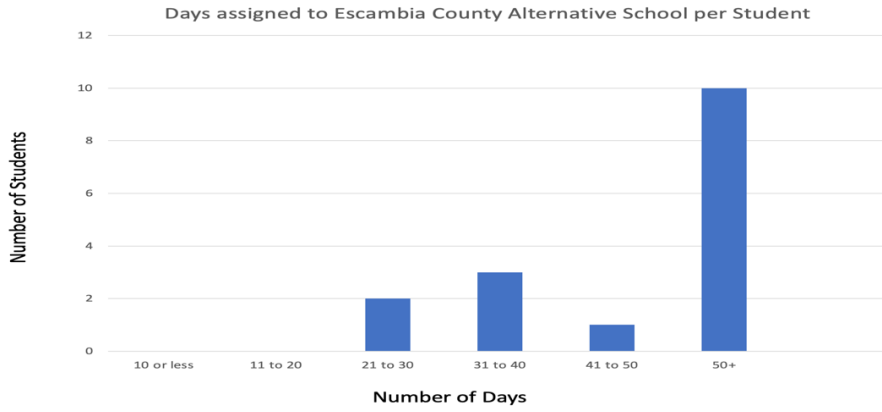


Figure 2

Question 2 Survey Response

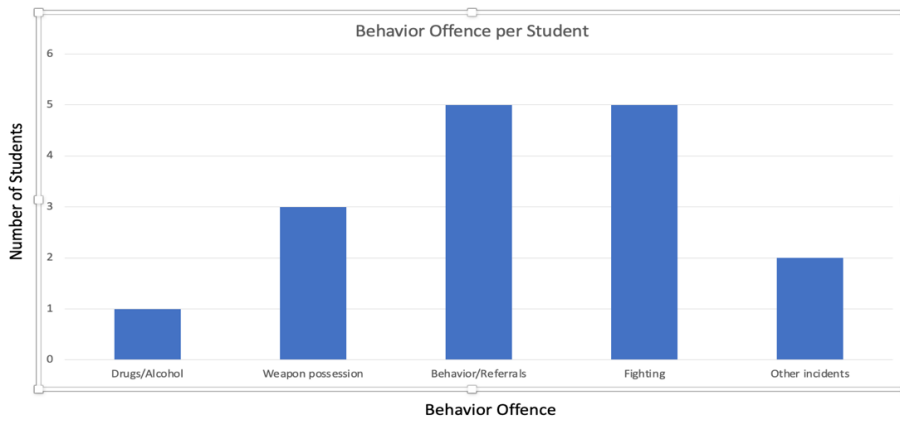


Table 5*Frequency and Average of Survey Responses*

Question	Frequency					Avg.
	1	2	3	4	5	
In the previous question you marked the action that had you assigned to the alternative school. While at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, I continued this action.	8	6	1	1	0	1.7
Discipline is stricter at the alternative school than at my home school.	1	0	0	1	14	4.7
My academics have improved since I have been at Escambia County Alternative School.	0	0	1	6	9	4.5
My referrals have decreased since I have been at the Escambia County Alternative School.	1	0	0	7	8	4.4
All the teachers at the Escambia County Alternative School use the same rules.	1	10	1	3	1	2.6
All the teachers at the Escambia County Alternative school use the same discipline strategies in the classroom.	0	11	1	4	0	2.6
The principal is present and willing to answer any concerns I have.	0	2	4	3	7	3.9
My behavior has changed because of my assignment to the Escambia County Alternative School.	2	1	2	5	6	3.8
My behavior would change, leading to less referrals if every teacher used the same referral process.	0	0	1	6	9	4.5
My behavior would change, leading to less referrals if every teacher used the same classroom management styles.	1	0	1	7	7	4.5

Note: Averages for each question were calculated by multiplying each response value by the corresponding Likert scale value and summing the results and then dividing the results by the total number of participant responses to the question.

Discussion of the Findings

Five predominant themes developed from the interviews. The first was teacher behavior, the second was the referral process, the third was faculty meeting, the fourth was strategies, and the fifth was outcomes. The Discussion of the Findings section discusses the data collection and analysis results from this research. This section will also compare the findings concerning scholarly literature.

The first theme revealed in the interviews was teacher behavior. When the teachers were interviewed, Participants Two, Four, and Five had comments about teacher behavior. Participant Five stated, “teachers need to be positive and have a positive reinforcement for the students.” Participant Two stated the teachers should “always be calm in the classroom” and “always do your best not to yell.” Nese et al. (2021) surveyed 23 middle school students. The students stated the teachers with the best response would stay calm and not yell at the students. Participants One, Three, and Four stated, “walk around the room, do not just sit at your desk.” All the participants stated to “keep your eyes on the kids. Always know what the students are doing.”

The second theme resulting from the interviews was the referral process. Participants One, Three, and Five agreed to warn the students first, and then talk to them about their behavior. If the behavior still does not improve, teachers take away the students’ breaks. If their behavior does not improve, then a referral is written. Nese et al. (2021) surveyed 23 middle school students. The students stated they would prefer the teacher to talk to them privately rather than in front of the class. The students stated the latter is very embarrassing for them. Some students said their behavior would worsen when a teacher corrects them in front of other students. The authors also wrote students should receive immediate redirection when they exhibit unwanted behavior.

The third theme that emerged was procedures. The teachers discussed the following procedures during the interviews. All the teachers agreed seating arrangement is very important. Nese et al. (2021) surveyed 23 middle school students. The students stated that teachers with better responses to student behavior would move a student's seat rather than remove the student from the classroom. Participant Five stated, "every teacher must use their classroom management skills." This participant felt not all teachers used the skills and strategies talked about and learned in professional development. Anyon, Nicotera, and Veeh (2016) wrote for the implementation to be successful, all teachers must have buy-in. They also stated it is very important for the administration and implementation leaders to show positivity toward the implementation for it to be successful. Participant Two mentioned to "make sure you know the behavior of the students and their personalities" and "be aware of mood changes." Participant One stated to "always walk around the classroom." Participants Two, Three, Four and Five mentioned, "keep the students quiet" and "do not allow the students to talk." All the participants mentioned to "keep your eyes on the kids." Participant Two stated, "check the proximity to students." Participant Two stated to "be aware of mood changes among the students." Participant Five stated, "make sure the students know our rules." This participant stated one way is to sit down with the students on their first day, and give them a copy of the rules, and go over each rule with the students. Feuerborn et al. (2018) wrote that teachers should develop three to five social-behavioral expectations for all the students on campus. Valenti and Kerr (2015) surveyed two schools on their rule implementation for their school. The teachers came together and decided what rules should be implemented at school. Some teachers thought some behaviors were more important than others. For example, fighting was much more important than being out of dress code. The teachers ranked the rules by importance and decided which rules they would implement. Participant Four stated, "make sure

the room is quiet.” Participant Four stated, “make sure the students are on task at all times.”

Participants Two, Three and Four mentioned the classroom schedule and to “make sure you are following the schedule for bathroom times and classroom breaks.”

The fourth theme from interviews was strategies. Participant Two stated, “you have to be consistent with every student every day.” Feuerborn et al. (2018) stated all teachers should have the same behavioral expectations for all students and apply consistent consequences for misbehavior. Participant Five stated to “give incentives for students positive behavior.” The authors also wrote to acknowledge all student behavior that meets expectations. Participant Four stated, “have a calm climate in your classroom.” Participant Two stated, “check the proximity of the students, you do not want personalities to clash or triggers to go off.”

The fifth theme noted during the interviews was outcomes. Participant Five stated, “Attendance did improve after the implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts.” Ewing et al. (2021) wrote that some of the findings in their research showed students in an alternative setting miss school because of factors other than school. One was transportation, one was safe and stable housing, and one was safety. One student stated she did not feel safe walking to school but felt safe in the building. Another factor that will affect attendance is a part-time job. According to Ewing et al., better attendance is enabled when students have a sense of belonging and strong teacher-student support. Participant One commented, “Students’ grades have increased while attending the alternative school.” Madigan et al. (2016) wrote improved behavior management may take several years to notice improved student achievement. The same authors also noted a school in Kentucky had implemented an alternative discipline program, and over the course of nine years, they saw a five-point gain in the areas of reading, math, science, and social studies on their Kentucky Core Context Tests. Participant Five stated that after the implementing Capturing

Kids Hearts, “behavior as a whole is not better, but it has been better for individual students.” Madigan et al. (2016) wrote that one or two years might be necessary to fully implement an alternative discipline program and see reduced problem behavior. Participants Two and Five stated, “If I take away their PE the behavior gets better.” Participant One stated, “The better rapport I have with a student, the better their behavior.” Nese et al. (2021) stated one way to keep kids from leaving the classroom because of behavior is strong teacher-student relationships. According to Ewing et al. (2021), better attendance is enabled when students have a sense of belonging and strong teacher-student support.

Three central themes emerged from the focus group. The first theme was the referral process, the second was strategies, and the third was school wide procedures. The first theme was a new referral process. The process the teachers agreed upon was to give the student a warning. If the behavior does not improve, teachers should talk to the student about his/her behavior. The teacher may assign a discipline essay if the behavior does not improve. If the behavior does not improve, the teacher may give a behavior intervention such as taking away P.E. If the behavior still does not improve, the teacher may write a referral/send to the principal.

The second theme was strategies. Participant Four stated to “have a contract with the students and keep it alive all year.” The other participants stated it is easy to have the contract initially, but it is harder to get the students on board that are not there when the contract is initiated. The teachers decided every first period teacher would explain the contract to each new student and have them initial the contract. They would also go over all the rules for the alternative school again to assure the student knows what is expected of him/her. Adamson et al. (2019) wrote the behavioral contract is a written document of negotiations between students and teachers. The contract will contain the expected behavior of the students. Adamson et al. (2019)

further wrote students must know what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is. Students also need to know what the consequences and rewards are. All the participants agreed every teacher should walk around the classroom to know what the students are always doing. While the teachers are walking around, they can also watch the students. Instead of getting loud in the classroom, the teachers could use hand gestures to message the students. *Capturing Kids Hearts* teaches educators to use hand gestures in lieu of getting loud or yelling in the classroom (Flippen Group, 2022).

The third theme was schoolwide procedures. The teachers agreed there is a benefit to schoolwide rules and strategies for the classrooms. They all agreed if every teacher followed every rule and used the same strategies, the students would know what to expect from each teacher and in each classroom. Feuerborn et al. (2018) wrote that all teachers must buy in and be consistent for an alternative discipline plan to work. According to their research classified staff at the school saw inconsistencies among teachers. One teacher would implement the program one way and another teacher would implement the program a different way. The only teacher that had a separate process for students with disabilities was the special education teacher. The special education teacher stated all teachers should know the IEP for each student and ensure they are following the accommodations for these students.

Five themes were present in student surveys. The first theme was discipline, the second theme was academics, the third theme was referrals, the fourth theme was schoolwide procedures, and the fifth theme was behavior. For the first theme of discipline, the question about stricter discipline at the alternative school, 93.8% agreed or strongly agreed. The second theme was academics. Of the surveyed students, 93.8% of the students surveyed marked their academics had improved while at the Escambia County Alternative in Flomaton, Alabama.

According to Wilkerson et al. (2016), attendance at alternative schools helps students earn their credits toward graduation. The third theme was referrals. Of the students surveyed, 93.8% of the students surveyed marked their referrals decreased while attending the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The fourth theme was schoolwide procedures. Of the surveyed students, 68.8% of the students surveyed marked that teachers do not use the same rules in the classroom. Of the surveyed students, 68.8% of the students surveyed marked the teachers do not use the same classroom strategies. In Feurborn's et al. (2018) research, paraprofessionals noticed the teachers were not using the same rules and classroom strategies. The paraprofessionals see many teachers daily and can see the similarities and differences throughout the day. The students surveyed also saw the differences among the teachers. The fifth theme was behavior. Of the students surveyed, 68.8% of the students surveyed stated their behavior increased while attending the Escambia County Alternative School. Of the students surveyed, 93.8% of the students surveyed marked their behavior would increase if all teachers used the same referral process. Of the students surveyed, 87.6% of the students surveyed marked their behavior would increase if every teacher used the same classroom management strategies. Valenti and Kerr (2015) did case studies of two middle schools and their implementation of schoolwide rules, discovering that while not a fast and easy task, but both schools agreed on schoolwide rules and began implementing them.

Summary

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County

Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presented the Interview Findings, Focus Group Findings, and Survey Findings.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The problem was that the number of referrals on file at Escambia County Alternative School increased by 50% from November/December 2021 to January/February 2022 (Escambia County Alternative School, 2022). This chapter of the report presents the Recommendations, the Roles of the Stakeholders, Resources Needed, Timeline, and Summary.

Recommendations

The purpose of this applied research study was to provide recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama. The central research question for this study was, How can the problem of increased referrals be solved at the Escambia County Alternative School? Based on the scholarly literature and data collection and analysis, three possible solutions are recommended to answer the central research question. The four recommendations are:

1. Develop a referral process for all teachers to follow.
2. Establish a process for academics for students with disabilities.
3. Establish a process for behavior modification for students with disabilities.
4. Establish schoolwide rules for students to follow.
5. Establish schoolwide strategies for teachers to follow.

Recommendations for a Referral Process

The first recommendation is to develop a referral process for all teachers to follow. When the participants were interviewed, no one had the same referral process. During the focus group,

the participants were asked how it would impact the students if all teachers had the same process. All the participants agreed the students would know exactly what to expect from each teacher. The participants were asked about a referral process on which everyone could agree. Participant Four stated to give them a warning first. If their behavior does not improve, the teacher should talk to them about their behavior. The teacher may give a discipline essay if the behavior does not improve. If the behavior does not improve, have a behavioral intervention, such as no physical education. If the behavior does not improve, the teacher may write a referral to see the principal.

Escambia County Alternative School will follow the step system presented by Capturing Kids Hearts (Flippen Group, 2022). The administration will have a faculty meeting to discuss the referral process. The teachers will collaborate about the step system presented by Capturing Kids Hearts and decide on an implementation date. Step one is warning. In this step, the goal is to remind the student of the contract that they signed and the rule they are breaking. In step two, the aim is to ask questions. For example, teachers may ask questions such as: “What are you doing?” “What are you supposed to be doing?” “Are you doing it?” “What are you going to do about it?” In cases of repeated behavior, the teacher may ask: “What is going to happen if you break our social contract again?” For the questions to work, teachers should only ask the question two times. Teachers should let there be silence. The educator should give an affirmation about the student, not the behavior. If the student does not answer the question correctly, the teacher may either answer the question or let them know they are choosing the consequence. If required, the teacher should ask the question again. If the correct answer is received, give an affirmation, and move to the next question. Step three is to call parents or guardian as part of the consequence. Step four allows the teacher to write a referral or send the student to the principal. If the student

is sent to ISS, the teacher must try to get to ISS before the student returns to class to affirm them and make amends. When students answer the questions, teachers should not allow the answer “good” or “bad” for behavior. Instead, students must verbalize what they did was wrong (Flippen Group, 2022). After implementation of the referral process, the administrator will have another faculty meeting to discuss the progress of the new referral process.

Establish a Process for Academics for Students with Disabilities

The next recommendation is to establish a process for academics for students with disabilities. A child has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that makes it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age. Students may have problems with schoolwork, communication, or behavior (Nidirect government services, n.d.). Some students need a process to help them academically, some with behavior management, and some need a process in both areas (Barnes et al., 2023; Sebag, 2010). Students with disabilities should be able to make progress academically as their non-disability cohorts do. When teachers use strategies in their classrooms, it will assist the students with disabilities in understanding the content being taught. Barnes et al. (2023) focused on strategies for science classrooms, but the strategies will work for other teachers also. Barnes et al. found that many teachers have never had a formal class to teach the strategies for students with disabilities. The teachers that stated they did have training were trained on the job.

For the academic portion of the recommendation, the administration will need to assign a committee. The principal and committee can decide which strategies fit their school. The administration will need to have a faculty meeting to teach this process to the teachers. During the faculty meeting the teachers and principal will determine the implementation date for this process. Barnes et al. (2023) found four strategies to help students with disabilities with their

academics: building decoding skills, increasing fluency, using comprehension building practices, and providing students with opportunities to practice making text. Barnes et al. wrote the first two are taught heavily in elementary school, so they focused on the last two recommendations. The authors further wrote explicit instruction is very important when working with students with disabilities. Explicit instruction is teaching everything. Teachers should not assume the student knows part of the topic. Teachers should start from the beginning and teach what the student needs to know. When a student with disabilities is taught vocabulary explicitly, they have gains three times that of the non-disability student. Vocabulary is very important to increase reading comprehension and academic skills. Students with disabilities have a smaller vocabulary than their non-disabled cohort. It is very important to begin a lesson with vocabulary. Barnes et al. (2023) also wrote that a student's vocabulary ability is linked to their comprehension. Teachers should choose a text for the students to read. After the students read the text, use certain strategies to help them comprehend what they read. For example, the teacher could use summarizing, asking, and answering questions, paraphrasing, and finding the main idea of a passage. The teacher can also use graphic organizers to assist with comprehension. "Graphic organizers are tools that use graphic elements to help show relationships between different ideas and concepts" (Barnes et al, 2023, p 5). Skills such as these may be components suggested for integration as part of the process for academics for students with disabilities. After implementation the administration will have another faculty meeting to discuss the academic portion of the process to see how well it is going for the teachers and the students.

Establish a Process for Behavior Modification for Students with Disabilities

The next recommendation is to establish the behavior modification portion of the recommendation. The principal should have the special education teacher establish this portion

of the process and teach it to the other teachers. The principal will have a separate faculty meeting to teach this process to the teachers. The teachers and principal will determine the implementation date. Sebag (2010) suggested a model to help the students use self-advocacy and self-determination that promotes student “buy in” (p 22). Self-determination is a belief that all individuals have the right to direct their lives. It encompasses a broad set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that enable an individual to seek goals, make decisions, explore options, solve problems, speak up for himself or herself, understand what supports are needed for success, and evaluate outcomes. (Sebag, 2010). Self-advocacy is when students participate and contribute to their IEP and transition planning. The student will have a say in what happens and prepare for the future. Sebag (2010) described a self-advocacy model with five steps. In this model or process, the student is the author, and the teacher is the facilitator. Step one is to fill out the weekly grade report. Step two is a student-teacher conference. During this step, the student will identify problems with conduct. In step three, the student will develop goals and strategies to help in the areas identified in step two. Step four is a follow-up conference between the student and the teacher. The student and teacher should discuss how the strategies have helped with the areas identified in step two. Step five is to adjust the goals and strategies if needed. The student and their teacher should assess their goals and strategies. Step one is a weekly grade report for which students are responsible. The weekly grade report will be worth 20 points daily, Monday through Friday. The 20 points is divided into four areas. The first area is on time. Did the student arrive to class on time? The next area is warm up. Did the student complete their warm-up for the day? The next area is homework. Did the student turn in their assignments? The next area is conduct. Did the student participate in class and observe the classroom rules and procedures? Step two and step three take place together. Step two is a conference between the student and the

student. The teacher and the student will review the weekly grade report. The student will reflect on the weekly grade report and identify areas where he struggles. Next, the student will work on goals and strategies. If the student does not mention the consequences of the actions for the week, the teacher should mention them. Steps four and five take place together with step four as a follow-up conference. The student will reflect on their goals and strategies. The teacher will guide and coach the student through their reflection. Step five is to adjust the goals and strategies if needed. The student will adjust the goals and strategies if the current strategies are not working. The teacher should coach and guide students to articulate their goals/strategies. This process will help create a student that is self-sufficient and independent in their lives. This process is a tool that can help them at school and outside of school and could be considered as a model for behavior modification processes at Escambia County Alternative School. After implementation of the behavior modification portion of the recommendation, the administration will have another faculty meeting to discuss the behavior modification process to see how it is going with the teachers and students.

Establish Schoolwide Rules

The next recommendation is to establish schoolwide rules for students to follow. The administration will need to assign a leadership team and have a meeting with the group. During the leadership team meeting all members and the administrator agreed schoolwide rules would be best for the teachers and the students. In the student surveys, they stated how each student would know what to expect from each teacher since they all have the same rules. However, based on the student surveys, all teachers do not have the same rules. According to Valenti and Kerr (2015), there are several steps to develop and implement schoolwide rules. The researcher recommends starting the process as Valenti and Kerr, they started with surveys of rules for the

staff and faculty. First, the authors suggested having a staff meeting and explaining the survey's importance of the schoolwide rules. The next step is ensuring all staff and faculty know the surveys are anonymous. Valenti and Kerr recommend showing a sample bar graph from the data. After all the data are gathered from the surveys, there should be another staff meeting to discuss the data. Teachers should have copies of the data for all the staff to see, or project so everyone can access it. While the staff is discussing the importance of rules, the staff should understand that a rule received a low score, meaning the staff did not rank it of high importance, and it can be removed from the rule list that is being compiled. If the staff cannot develop a list of rules as one big group, the staff should break into small groups and assign different areas to each group. Once all the rules compiled, the staff should place them on the wall and look at them like a gallery walk for approval. The rules on the wall will be the rules the school will follow schoolwide. If many teachers leave or retire and an influx of new teachers with new personalities are hired, the process will need to be revisited. Also, the original teachers may have a different insight about the rules since they have been using them in the classroom. After all of the rules have been implemented the teachers and administration will need to have a follow-up faculty meeting to discuss the progress.

Establish Schoolwide Strategies

The last recommendation is to establish schoolwide strategies for teachers to follow. The administrator will need to have a faculty meeting to discuss schoolwide strategies for teachers. The first part of this recommendation will be a classroom contract. *Capturing Kids Hearts* (Flippen Group, 2022) and *Relationship Centered Learning* (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023) suggest having a classroom contract. A classroom contract should include how students treat each other, how students treat their teacher, and how the teacher treats the students.

Teachers can implement the classroom contract at any time, but it is best when they have learned some of the personalities of the students. Once the contract has been written, everyone in the class signs the contract including the teacher. The teacher will at that time implement the contract and post the contract on the wall to revisit when needed. (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023). One of the participants in the focus group stated the contract needs to stay alive all year and not just hang on the wall. According to Relationship Centered Learning, the teacher should have the students create goals for each area, teacher to student, student to student and student to student. The teacher should then remind the students of one goal weekly. These actions keep the contract alive, rather than it just hanging on the wall. (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023). Another recommendation is to revisit some strategies from Capturing Kids Hearts that are not currently being used. Teachers should greet each student at the door and shake their hand. This one action helps develop a relationship between the teacher and the student. The teacher also needs to create an emotional bond with the students. The teacher can have the students to get up and tell something good that has happened to them recently. This activity should only take up about three to five minutes of class time. This activity shows the students that the teacher has an interest in them and sets a positive mood for the beginning of class (Flippen Group, 2022). There are more strategies that are recommended by relationship centered learning, 60-second relate break, two minute connection and 90 second spark. The 60 second relate break is a way for the students to get to know their shoulder partner better. The teacher will ask a question and then the shoulder partners will discuss the question and how it relates to themselves. The two-minute connection can take place at anytime and anywhere. Students can stay in their seats, or the teacher could have them form a circle. The teacher will ask a short question like who is your superhero? or what is your favorite color? The

student will answer the question quickly and turn to the next student until all the students have answered the question. The 90-second spark starts by the teacher greeting the students at the door. Once the teacher comes into the classroom, the teacher will have the student greet two to three students. The greeting can be saying hello, a fist bump, or high five. This strategy will help create energy in the classroom. (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023). The administration will need to set up the professional development day for a professional to teach various strategies. After the professional development day the teachers and administration will need to determine which strategies to implement and to decide the implementation date. After implementation they will need to have a follow up faculty meeting to discuss the implementation.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders need to be addressed to solve the problem for this research study. It is important to provide a plan for implementing the recommendations to be implemented and who is responsible for each task. The roles and responsibilities for the referral process, process for academics and behavior modification for students with disabilities, schoolwide rules for students and school wide strategies for teachers are described in this section.

Referral Process

For the problem of the increased office discipline referrals, it is recommended that the Escambia County Alternative School implement a referral process for everyone to follow. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are important to ensure success.

Administrators

The role of the administrator in the referral process is to first have a faculty meeting. During the meeting allow the teachers to collaborate and find a process that they all agree to and can follow. The administration will determine the implementation date and a follow up faculty meeting. The administrator will then monitor the process to ensure all the teachers are following the process.

Teachers

The teachers will be the ones to collaborate and define the referral process. During the staff meeting, each teacher must address concerns about the referral process and any changes they feel need to be made. According to Martin et al. (2021), some teachers may not feel comfortable making changes when needed. These teachers may need more coaching and practice before they are comfortable with the changes. According to Lohrmann et al. (2008), some teachers are resistant and have different attitudes and beliefs about change.

Process for Academics for Students with Disabilities

To solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, it is recommended to develop and implement a process for academics for students with disabilities. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are important to ensure success.

Administrators

The role of the administrator is to assure a process is developed. The administrator would assign a committee to develop academic strategies and teach it to the other teachers. The administration will have the committee implement the process for academics for students with disabilities. After the implementation, the administration will need to have a follow up faculty

meeting to discuss the progress of each program. The administration will need to continue to monitor each teacher to assure they are following the process for academics and behavior modification for students with disabilities.

Teachers

The committee will be selected by the administrator. The committee will decide which area to begin with first. According to Barnes et al., (2023) the two areas that need help on the middle and high school level is using comprehension building practices and providing students with opportunities to make practice text. Teachers do not need to assume the students know how to do these processes. The teachers need to show the students how to use each strategy. The committee will need to decide which graphic organizers they want to use for reading comprehension/vocabulary. The committee will need to teach the process for academics for students with disabilities to each teacher.

Process for Behavior Modification for Students with Disabilities

To solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, it is recommended to develop and implement a process for behavior modification for students with disabilities. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are important to ensure success.

Administrators

The role of the administrator is to assure the process for behavior modification for students with disabilities is developed. The administrator would have the special education teacher assist with the behavior modification process and teach it to the other teachers. The administration will need to determine the implementation of the process. After the implementation, the administration will need to have a follow up faculty meeting to discuss the

progress of the process for behavior modification for students with disabilities. The administration will need to continue to monitor each teacher to assure they are following the process for behavior modification for students with disabilities.

Teachers

The special education teacher will assist with the behavior modification process. The special education teacher would go with the process used by Sebag (2010). Sebag described a self-advocacy model that has five steps. In this process the student is the author, and the teacher is the facilitator. Step one is to fill out the weekly grade report. Step two is a student-teacher conference. During this step, the student will identify problem areas with conduct/behavior. In step three, the student will develop goals and strategies to help in the areas identified in step two. Step four is a follow-up conference between the student and the teacher in which they discuss how the strategies have helped with the areas identified in step two. Step five is to adjust the goals and strategies if needed. The student and their teacher will assess their goals and strategies. The teachers will be responsible for teaching the steps in the recommendation section. The student will adjust the goals and strategies if the current strategies are not working. The teacher will coach and guide students to articulate their goals/strategies. This process will help create a student that is self-sufficient and independent in their lives. This process is a tool that can help them at school and outside of school. All teachers must attend a faculty meeting to discuss the new process and implementation dates. The special education teacher will need to teach the behavior modification portion of the process.

Schoolwide Rules

To solve the problem of increased referrals at Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, it is recommended to implement schoolwide rules for students. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are important to ensure success.

Administrators

The role of the administrator would be to develop the initial surveys. The administrator could assign a leadership team to assist with developing the surveys. According to Griffiths et al. (2019), the administration should have a leadership team to help with the rollout and to make decisions. The administrator and leadership team must determine what rules and behavior will be included in the survey. The administrator will need to distribute the surveys. Valenti and Kerr (2015) suggest having a short staff meeting for the teachers to complete the surveys. After all the teachers have completed their survey, the administrator must calculate the data. Once the data are gathered, it is time for another staff meeting to decide on the schoolwide rules. The administrator will be responsible for an implementation date and a follow up faculty meeting. The administrator will also be responsible for ensuring all teachers are following the same rules while they observe in the classrooms.

Teachers

The teachers will be the ones to complete the surveys for the administrator to calculate data. Each teacher needs to fill out the survey so their voice can be heard. After the data is gathered, the teachers will determine the rules to be used schoolwide in a staff meeting. During the semi-informal interviews, one of the participants stated “It will work if everyone does it. Some people do not believe it will make a difference.”

Schoolwide Strategies

To solve the problem of increased office discipline referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School in Flomaton, Alabama, it is recommended to implement schoolwide strategies for teachers. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are important to ensure success.

Administrators

The administrator will need to have a faculty meeting to discuss schoolwide strategies for teachers. The administrator must be on board with all strategies to be used in the classroom. There are many programs that the administrator can use, but they must believe it can work and express that to the staff and faculty. The administrator will need to hold professional development to teach the teachers the strategies to be used. The administrator will need to be willing to hire professionals to teach the decided specific program. The administration will have a faculty meeting to determine which strategies to implement. The administration will also determine the implementation date and a follow up faculty meeting to discuss the strategies.

Teachers

Each teacher must be willing to implement the strategies in their classroom. The teachers must attend the faculty meetings and professional development to learn each strategy. The teacher will need to carry out each facet of the program. They must decide when they will implement the contract and how many terms they want on each contract. They will need to have the questions to ask students printed out and posted on the walls of each classroom.

Resources Needed

The resources needed to solve the problem for this research study must be considered. A plan for how the funds will be secured will also be provided. This section will describe the resources needed.

Referral Process

The main resource for the referral process is time. The school will not need to hire anyone to teach the process. The teachers will teach each other. Although money is not a resource for the referral process, teacher buy in will be. The faculty will meet to discuss the referral process to utilize. Teachers could work collaboratively to create a process everyone agrees on and will use. After implementation, the principal would need to assure everyone was using the same referral process to keep unity among the teachers and students. The principal will need to present the process in such a way the teachers are willing to participate and are on board with implementation.

Process for Academics for Students with Disabilities

The main resource for the process for academics for students with disabilities is time. The school does not need to hire anyone from the outside to teach the faculty. The teacher committee will teach the process during a faculty meeting.

The teacher committee will decide how to implement reading into the lessons at school. The students already work independently. They would use graphic organizers for the students to answer questions about what they read. They would focus on the main ideas of a passage. The focus group would decide which graphic organizer to use and would teach the faculty how to use it.

Process for Behavior Modification for Students with Disabilities

The main resource for the process for behavior modification for students with disabilities is time. The school does not need to hire anyone from the outside to teach the faculty. The special education teacher will teach during a faculty meeting the processes to be implemented.

The special education teacher will determine the behavioral model to use. The self-advocacy model by Sebag (2010) is a good process to get the students thinking about their behavior. The special education teacher will have the self-advocacy form and explain to each teacher how to use it. Since the population of special education students is high at the alternative school, each teacher will have a certain number of students to mentor. The special education teacher will inform each faculty member how to fill out the form. With this form, the behavior of each special education student should increase. If this process works for the special education population, the school could later be implement to the rest of the population at the school.

Schoolwide Rules

The main resource for implementing schoolwide rules for students is time from the faculty and staff for training. The principal could also save money and develop and implement school rules the same way Valenti and Kerr (2015) implemented. The principal develops the rule surveys for the faculty to fill out. The administrator would hold a faculty meeting and determine from the surveys which rules are the most important. From this data the administrator would decide which rules to implement first, second and third.

Schoolwide Strategies

The main resource for implementing schoolwide strategies for teachers is time and school funds. The principal may decide to hire a professional company to come in and assist or have the teachers attend a conference. Conference attendance would require funds. The funds would come

from the yearly budget that is given to the school by the district. The funds would also depend on which program the principal decided to utilize. Schoolwide PBIS would cost \$12,400 per school (Swain-Bradway et al., 2017). Capturing Kids Hearts would cost \$65,000 to \$70,000 to implement (Lockwood, 2019). This program is for at least 50 participants per session. This school could partner with another school to share the cost if this program is chosen. Attending a relationship centered conference would cost \$625.00 per person, travel would cost approximately \$500.00 per person, and lodging would cost \$300.00 for double occupancy (National Educators for Restorative Practices, 2023).

Since the school has already attended one three day Capturing Kids Hearts session, they can receive one day free follow-up virtual session. If the school decided to go this route it would save on money. The principal would need to set up a date and time with Capturing Kids Hearts. All teachers would need to be in attendance for this professional development day. Since all teachers are not using Capturing Kids Hearts in their classroom, this would be a good reminder of the benefits of this program. The Capturing Kids Hearts trainer can use this day to see what strategies the teachers are using and remind them of others that they could be using.

After the training the principal will need to decide which strategies need to be implemented first and develop an implementation schedule for the strategies decided upon. After implementation, the principal will need to follow up with the teachers to assure everyone is using the same strategies in the classroom.

Timeline

To help solve the problem of this research study, a plan must be in place for each recommendation. The timeline for each recommendation is included in this section.

Referral Process

Implementation of the referral process will take approximately twelve weeks. See Table 6 for the timeline of the referral process implementation.

Table 6

Timeline of the Referral Process

Date	Action Item
September 1, 2023	The administration will have a faculty meeting to discuss the referral process.
September 8, 2023	The teachers collaborate to find a process they all agree on.
September 15, 2023	The administration and teachers will determine an implementation date
September 22, 2023	Implementation of referral process
October 22, 2023	Follow-up faculty meeting after the implementation of the new referral process.
November 2023 +	Continue to implement the referral process. Assure the goals and objectives are met.

The Process for Academics for Students with Disabilities

Implementation of a process for academics for students with disabilities will take approximately five weeks. See Table 7 for the Timeline of a process for students with disabilities.

Table 7

Timeline of a process for students with disabilities

Date	Action Item
January 2, 2024	Administration asks for volunteers to be a part of a teacher committee to help implement the academic portion of the process and ask the special education teacher to implement the behavior modification portion of the process.
January 8, 2024	The teacher committee would determine which academic areas and strategies to focus on first.

Date	Action Item
January 15, 2024	Administration would have a faculty meeting for the teacher committee to teach the academic strategies to all teachers. Administration and teachers will determine the implementation date.
January 22, 2024	Implementation of the academic portion of the process for students with disabilities.
February 5, 2024	Administration will have a faculty meeting to follow up on the academic portion of the process for students with disabilities.
February 2024+	Continue with implementation of the process for academics for students with disabilities.

The Process for Behavior Modification for Students with Disabilities

Implementation of a process for academics for students with disabilities will take approximately six weeks. See Table 8 for the Timeline of a process for behavior modification for students with disabilities.

Table 8

Timeline of a process for behavior modification for students with disabilities

Date	Action Item
February 12, 2024	Administration will have a faculty meeting for the special education teacher to implement the behavior modification portion of the process for students with disabilities and teach all the faculty the behavior modification portion of the process.
February 19, 2024	Implementation of the behavior modification portion for students with disabilities.
March 18, 2024	Faculty meeting to discuss the implementation of both portions of the process for students with disabilities.
March 2024+	Continue with implementation of the process for students with disabilities.

Schoolwide Rules

Implementation of schoolwide rules for students will take approximately twelve weeks.

See Table 9 for the Timeline of Schoolwide Rules for Students.

Table 9

Timeline of Schoolwide Rules

Date	Action
August 1, 2024	A leadership team is developed
August 8, 2024	The Administration and leadership team will develop rule surveys for teachers to fill out.
August 15, 2024	Administration will deliver surveys to each teacher.
August 22, 2024	Teacher surveys need to be turned in.
September 2, 2024	Administration and leadership team will gather the survey data.
September 9, 2024	Administration will have a faculty meeting to discuss the survey data with the faculty.
September 16, 2024	Administration will have a faculty meeting to determine which rules would be implemented.
September 16, 2024	Implementation date would be determined.
October 1, 2024	Implementation of new schoolwide rules for students.
October 29, 2024	Faculty meeting to discuss the implementation of schoolwide rules for students.
October 2024+	Continue with implementation of schoolwide rules

Schoolwide Strategies

Implementing the schoolwide strategies for teachers will take more planning than the other recommendations. This implementation is approximately seven months. See Table 10 for the Timeline of Schoolwide Strategies for Teachers Implementation.

Table 10

Timeline of Schoolwide Strategies

Date	Action
November 1, 2024	Administration would have a faculty meeting to discuss the implementation of schoolwide strategies for teachers.
November 8, 2024	Faculty decided to go with Capturing Kids Hearts for economic reasons.
December 1, 2024	Administration schedules a professional development day with Capturing Kids Hearts for January 3, 2025. Administration sends an email to all faculty and staff about the professional development day and places a memo on the bulletin board.
January 3, 2025	Faculty members attend the professional development day with Capturing Kids Hearts.
January 6, 2025	Administration and faculty discuss the strategies in a faculty meeting and decide which strategies need to be implemented.
January 13, 2025	Implement the first three strategies to be used by the teachers.
January 27, 2025	Faculty meeting to discuss the first three strategies and what needs to change.
February 3, 2025	Implement the next three strategies to be used by teachers.
March 3, 2023	Faculty meeting to discuss the three strategies and what needs to change.
April 7, 2025	Implement the last three strategies to be used by teachers.
May 5, 2025	Faculty meeting to discuss the strategies and what needs to change.
May 2025+	Teachers continue with implementation. Administration continues to monitor teacher implementation.

Summary

The purpose of this applied research study was to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School. The problem is, according to the referrals on file at the Escambia County Alternative School, the number of referrals went up by 50% from a six-week period in October/November 2021 to a six-week period in January/February 2022. This chapter of the report presented the Recommendations, the Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders, Resources Needed, Timeline, and Summary. Four recommendations were made,

including the referral process, schoolwide rules for students, schoolwide strategies for teachers, and a process for students with disabilities.

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[%20communication%20or%20behaviour.](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/children-special-educational-needs#:~:text=A%20child%20has%20special%20educational,with%20schoolwork%2C%20communication%20or%20behaviour.)

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Appendix

Appendix A

Escambia County Schools Alternative Programs

Alternative School * Compass School * Virtual School

21280 Hwy 31
Flomaton, AL 36411
251-296-4113

Keiana Quarker White, Ed.S. - Principal

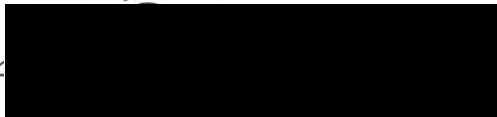
Terry Knowles - Compass Coordinator

August 2, 2022

Ms. Hoffman,

After careful review of your proposal entitled, *Recommendations to solve the problem of increased referrals at the Escambia County Alternative School*, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your research at Escambia County Alternative School.

Sincerely,



K. Quarker White, M.Ed., Ed.S.
1-251-296-4113 Ext. 3501
keiana.white@escoschools.net