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Abstract

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Examining the Long-Term Suspension Process for Students Classified with an Emotional Disturbance

By

Samantha Brody

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Marie Cianca

Committee Member

Dr. Donna Riter

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

St. John Fisher College

August 2018

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my grandmothers, Laura Brody and Cecile "Cissy" Weiss. I further dedicate this manuscript to my mom and dad, husband, children, former students, family, and friends. All of you have so graciously instilled in me the courage to work for positive change and to continue my commitment to serve others. I recognize and appreciate all of the sacrifices you afforded for me to have obtained this degree. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your endless patience, support, and reassurance. A sincere, heartfelt thanks is also extended to the members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Marie Cianca and Dr. Donna Riter. Thank you.

Biographical Sketch

Samantha C. Brody is currently a special education administrator in Rochester, New York. Ms. Brody attended Buffalo State College from 1989-1993 and graduated with a Bachelor of Elementary and Special Education in 1993. She continued at Buffalo State College and graduated with a Master of Special Education degree in 1994. In 2014, she obtained her Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Administration from the University of Rochester. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2016 and began her doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Brody pursued her research on the impact of long-term suspensions for students classified with an emotional disturbance under the direction of Dr. Marie Cianca and received her Ed.D. degree in August 2018.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of students classified with an emotional disturbance who were long-term suspended from school, their parent/guardians, and school administrators. Using a semi-structured interview design, this study provided participants in an urban school district in upstate New York, with an opportunity to share their firsthand perspectives on the long-term suspension process and its effects on student identities, school experiences, and future ambitions. Research questions were aligned with Bandura's self-efficacy theoretical framework. The first research question examined the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process. The second research question explored what, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension.

As a result data collected from the participants, three themes emerged from the first research question: (a) asymmetrical educational experience; (b) communication failure; and (c) self-destructive relationships. In addition, four themes surfaced from the second research question: (a) perceptions of being misunderstood and worthless; (b) set up for failure; (c) public school pipeline to incarceration; and (d) preventable wildfire. The findings from this study suggest that the current long-term suspension process exacerbates the academic failure of the students, and leaves students with a diminished

sense of well-being. Participant data revealed that there is consensus that the long-term suspension system, as currently operated, is broken and in need of comprehensive repair.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Students, School, and Suspension

Chief among America's most important functions is the establishment of state and local governments that protect the fundamental right, of all school-aged children, to a free public education (*Brown v. Board of Educ*., 1954; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004) in a safe, orderly, and well-disciplined school (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Although providing a public education is federally mandated in the United States, educational provisions vary from state to state, as do methods of student discipline (Parker, 2005). In the United States, many disciplinary options are available to educators and school administrators. Even so, punitive consequences have long been favored as a standard response to students who misbehave (Weissman, 2015). Willis (2011) and MacLeod (1995), respectively, found that nonconformist students tend to fail and are, ultimately, pushed out of schools because their decision to not fit in is too often met with intolerance and ridicule.

Although findings from Rausch and Skiba (2005) support that suspending disruptive students from school is the most commonly employed form of discipline, other types of disciplinary approaches can be applied. Alternatives to removing students from school for reasons of punishment are proving effective. For example, some schools have attempted to implement social-cognitive and conflict interventions (Fenning et al., 2011). In light of these developments, a 4-year study on one conflict intervention program, Making the Smart Choice, found that this program reduced suspensions for physical,

violent acts by half (Bruelin, Cimmarusti, Hetherington, & Kinsman, 2006). Another studied disciplinary option is a method called Alternatives to Suspension for Violent Behaviors (ASVB) (Bruelin, et al., 2006). The ASVB approach assigns a mediator to suspended students and their families so they may collaborate with the school ensure that the student and family understand and reach consensus about the repercussions of the student's actions. Another study lends further credence to a turning away from the status quo in terms of punishment in America's schools. The study, by Bruelin et al., (2006) found that students who participated in ASVB were four times less likely to be suspended. Furthermore, students involved in the ASVB program were observed to initiate fewer disciplinary referrals than students who did not participate in this alternative approach.

Regardless of the options available for disciplining students, school suspension is the most common type of disciplinary action assigned to students in public schools today, despite its controversial nature (Cobb-Clark, Kassenboehmer, Le, McVicar, & Zhang, 2014; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). From 1974 to 2000, U.S. school suspensions nearly doubled from 3.7% (1.7 million students) to 6.6% of students (3 million students) (Wald & Losen, 2003) despite a documented decline in school violence (Donahue, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1998; Kaufman et al., 2000). These statistical changes, decline in violence/increase suspensions, when viewed through the lens of contemporary American experience, appeal investigation into the sociopolitical motivations behind issuing suspensions for an ever-widening net of behavioral infractions. In 2004, over 3.2 million students were suspended from school and, in some states, suspended students accounted for more than 10% of the student body (Snyder, Dillow & Horrman, 2008). During the

2011-2012 school year, the national suspension rate at the secondary level was 18.1% (Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project, 2018). Black (2016) observed that more than 10% of students who were suspended were not being suspended for serious infractions of school policies.

Costenbader and Markson (1998) claimed that "suspension, generally viewed as a disciplinary action that is administered as a consequence of a student's inappropriate behavior, requires that a student absent him/herself from the classroom or from the school for a specified period of time" (p. 59). However, research supports that discipline practices have far too often been applied to students who need the most support (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette (2004) also discovered that a student's socioeconomic background, ethnic background, race, and gender could affect student suspension rates, and that suspending students contributes to their educational risk while denying them their equal educational opportunities. Additionally, Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1999) identified male, socioeconomically deprived, minority students who have a disability or have low academic achievement, as being disproportionately targeted for suspension from school. Evidence supports regarding the conclusion that African American males are suspended earlier on in their educational experience and also at disproportionately higher rates than any other ethnic group (Skiba, Horner, Chung, & Rausch, 2011; Townsend, 2000).

Types of Suspensions and Impact

Currently, short-term suspension (STS) and long-term suspension (LTS) are two types of punitive consequences used in public education, as is presented in Table 1.1. Both STS and LTS suspension require that a student be removed from class and

sometimes from school. The level of severity of the student's offense can impact the location and duration of suspension.

Table 1.1

Aspects of School Suspensions

Short-term Suspension (STS)	Long-term Suspension
Served in or out of school	Served at an interim alternative school location (IAES)
5 or fewer consecutive days	More than 10 consecutive school days
Minor violation of school's code of conduct	Major violation of school's code of conduct

In most school districts, students on short-term suspension are typically being disciplined for minor infractions within the school district's code of conduct (Clemson, 2015). The end result of this procedure is that the student is removed from his or her classes for an average of 3 to 5 school days (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994). While these students are assigned to serve their suspension in a separate location from their regular class in school, they are segregated from the general population, supervised, and expected to complete their work independently (Clemson, 2015). Some researchers have reported that students who serve their short-term suspension in school may benefit from the additional social/emotional and academic support they receive (Garibaldi, 1978; Mendez & Sanders, 1981; Mizell, 1978; Pare, 1983; Short, 1998). Their social interactions restricted, students serving suspension in an alternative location should expect to experience the following: eating lunch in isolation, having restricted privileges, and not talking (Short, Short, & Blanton 1994). The following sections describe the two types of school suspension in more detail.

Short-Term and Long-Term Suspension

Assigning a student to short-term suspension (STS) means that the student is prohibited from attending school, or any school sponsored events for 1 to 5 school days. Some, who fail to adequately estimate the importance of classroom time, especially for at-risk youth, might assume that the length of a short-term suspension doesn't amount to a significant deprivation of education (Black, 2016). A majority of short-term suspensions are for behavior violations, such as: failing to follow reasonable directions and using inappropriate language and demonstrating disrespectful behavior. These students are not removed from school long enough to qualify for an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) (Adbum-Muhaymin & Yearwood, 2007; Tobin & Sprague, 2000). However, Morris and Perry (2016) warn that even one short-term suspension can have a profound negative impact for the remainder of a student's school year as well as the student's educational future. Similarly, Fabelo et al. (2011) found that, after a student receives the first short-term suspension, chances of recidivism drastically increase. In other words, regardless of the length of short-term suspension, the implications for the student can be serious and should not be minimized (Black, 2016). Some recent evidence suggests that students who are short-term suspended are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors following their suspension (Brown, 2007; Hemphill, Heerde, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou, & Catalano, 2006; Henry & Huizinga, 2007).

In contrast to short-term suspension, long-term suspension often serves as a way of disciplining students who have seriously violated a district's code of conduct, such as causing serious disruption to the educational process and/or seriously affecting the safety of the school community (Student Discipline, 2013). Specifically, long-term suspension

is considered a "deprivation of a student's property and/or liberty interests protected under the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, the student is entitled to due process of law" (Cirillo, 2009). The New York State (NYS) Legislature established Educational Law 3214 (3) (c) in order to create its own procedural safeguards for protecting the rights of all students (Cirillo, 2009; New York Codes, 2017). For example, students recommended for a long-term suspension must receive the following assurances: (a) provided with an opportunity to participate in a hearing conducted by an impartial hearing officer, (b) receive notification of charges, (c) have an opportunity to hear and present evidence, (d) be allowed to testify at the hearing and be found innocent or guilty of the allegations (Cirillo, 2009; Student Discipline, 2013). According to state and federal law, long-term suspension occurs when a student is suspended for more than 10 consecutive days and may require a change in the student's school placement (Hartwig & Ruesh, 2000; New York Codes, 2017).

Effects of Suspension

Suspending students from school has been found to exacerbate a student's self-doubt (Adams, 2000; Costenbader & Markson, 1998) and can negatively impact a student's emotional and mental health (Krezmein, Leoene, & Archilles, 2006). Additional research suggests that suspended students have a greater chance of repeating a grade, failing to graduate from high school, *engaging in crim*inal activity, and/or being incarcerated as an adult (American Bar Association, & National Bar Association, 2001; Brooks, Losen & Walde, 2007; Losen, 2005; Skiba, 2014).

Further impacting the viability of this favored method of discipline, Losen (2005) posits that, despite multiple studies supporting that student suspension from school may

be ineffective in reducing behavioral problems and may have a negative impact on future behavior (Civil Rights Project, 2000; McCord, Wisdom, Bamba, & Crowell, 2000) suspension continues to be the favored mechanism for schools that wish to receive obedience and compliance from their students (Wilson, 2014). In other words, suspension does not necessarily change a student's behavior; rather, it is often done for the good of preserving the order of the school. Some researchers believe, however, that schools should implement restorative and inclusive practices, such that the student, parent or guardian, teachers, administrators and the community work together to address student discipline issues (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994). After implementing restorative practices, data collected between 2011 and 2015 in the San Francisco Unified School District indicated that such instances were reduced by 56% (Healy, 2016). Bandura's (1994) research noted that individuals who doubt their efficacy, such as students being suspended from school, can be significantly affected. Bandura (2001) studied the reductive effect of similar types of restorative practices on the number of psychological and behavioral health issues experienced and reported by students. Students who are struggling may be even more challenged when faced with significant consequences and setbacks, such as being suspended from school. Having the capacity to effectively process information, while fighting self-doubt and making decisions that affect one's future, becomes even more challenging for students with special needs (Bandura, 1994).

Laws and Regulations

Over four decades ago, school districts were allowed to deny educational access to students with disabilities if they were observed to be in violation of school policies (Zilz, 2006). However, the outcome of several district, circuit, and Supreme Court cases

changed that process. For example, *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) determined that students' constitutional Fourteenth Amendment right, requiring equal protection under the law, was being violated under this practice, based on the exclusionary nature of the process. As a result, a hearing must now be conducted before a student with special needs can be assigned long-term suspension. Two Supreme Court cases, *Doe v. Maher* (1986) and *Honig v. Doe* (1988) stipulated that students may not be suspended when the incident is directly related to their disability, otherwise known as a manifestation (Zilz, 2006). Allowing for these two critical steps of due process, schools can extensively review a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), individual discipline record, and previous psychological and psychiatric evaluations in order to determine if the specific incident is related to the student's disability.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education requires that a Manifestation Determination Review be conducted by a multidisciplinary team, prior to assigning long-term suspension to a student with special needs (Zilz, 2006). Furthermore, it is now mandated that Committees on Special Education oversee all programs, services, and accommodations that comprise a student's IEP and are responsible for affirming that all appropriate measures are being implemented whenever an incident occurs. These recently established regulations assist teams with determining whether a student should immediately return to school, be recommended for an out-of-school suspension (OSS), or be assigned to attend an IAES (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000). This process has proven to be effective in ensuring that students receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE), which is required by law (Skiba, 2002).

New York State's Constitution mandates that all children are entitled to a free public education (1938). In New York State (NYS) alone, over 100,000 short-term and long-term suspensions occurred during the 2012-2013 school year, meaning that an average of 565 students were long-term suspended from school every day during the 2012-2013 school year (Alliance for Quality Education, 2014). During the 2015-2016 school year, New York State was composed of 4,468 public schools, serving nearly 2.6 million students. Nearly 457,000 of these students were classified as students with disabilities. For 2015-2016, in response to the aforementioned alarming trends in suspension, NYS set the target of 2.7 % as the maximum tolerable percentage of suspensions of students with disabilities for more than 10 days. However, two out of the five largest school districts in the state did not meet the 2.7 % target rate (New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, n.d.).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides the most comprehensive set of rights for students with disabilities, particularly for students who are facing disciplinary consequences (Harvard Civil Rights, 2000) due to the rates of suspension associated with their disability (Eckenrode, Laird, & Dorris, 1993). In recognition of this disproportionate suspension rate of students with special needs, the Congress of the late 1990s passed IDEA to regulate how schools discipline students with special needs (Hartwig & Ruesh, 2000). More specifically, this Act assures students with special needs will not be disciplined for behavior that has a direct or substantial relationship to their disability (Scavongelli & Spanjaard, 2015). However, many advocates for individuals with disabilities perceive what they characterize as an

inconsistent application of IDEA throughout this country's school districts, with the disciplinary aspects of IDEA proving to be among the most controversial aspects of this new law (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000).

Even as students' rights are expanded to protect the differently abled, several school districts in the United States remain under attack for their failure to educate students with special needs who have received a long-term suspension (Wiessman, 2015). Harvard Civil Rights (2000) research explained that students and parents are often unaware of laws that protect students with special needs; in many circumstances, school officials are simply refusing to implement these laws. Based on state and national reports from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2018), 18,147 students with disabilities received some form of expulsion from school with educational services during the 2013-2014 school year. From the 4,894 schools in NYS, it was reported that approximately 709 students with special needs were long-term suspended, 29.5% of those students being African American (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2018).

According to the New York State Education Department's 2015-2016 report card, one of New York's Big 5 school districts reported having the lowest long-term suspension rate (1.3%), the lowest dropout rate (12%) and the highest graduation rate (48%) for students with disabilities. Conversely though, one of the Big 5 school districts in New York State had the highest long-term suspension rate (3.6%), the highest dropout rate (31%) and the lowest graduation rate (27%) for students with disabilities. These percentages highlight a possible connection between low suspension rates and high graduation rates and supports the argument that IDEA, which is meant to regulate and

minimize these disparities, is not being implemented consistently. Even more specifically, Aull (2012) reported discrepancies for disabled students who are continuing to be negatively affected by punitive school discipline policies, such as zero tolerance.

Zero Tolerance Policy

The term zero tolerance describes an extreme approach to disciplining students, regardless of their individual circumstances (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). Under zero tolerance, behavioral violations often result in short and long-term suspensions. DeMitchell and Hambacker (2016) extol zero tolerance as a no-nonsense, no-discretion, and consistently applied method for penalizing students who violate school district policy. These theorists refer to zero tolerance as a one-size-fits-all discipline practice. Compared to previous decades, contemporary school discipline practices are far more punitive than in the past. The absolute nature of zero tolerance policies, reflects a more criminalized approach to students who misbehave because there are no exceptions to the rules (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Hirschfield, 2008; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2012; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Welch & Payne, 2010). Christle et al. (2004) claim that zero tolerance policies undermine the purpose and mission of public education by appearing to abandon the education and enrichment of all students in order to punish those that misbehave.

Initially, zero tolerance policies were meant to improve school climate (Rausch & Skiba, 2005), and dissuade inappropriate behavior by inspiring fear of harsher penalties in would-be offenders (Ewing, 2000). Although Skiba's (2002) study found that these tactics effectively removed challenging students through the use of suspension, the involved students often experienced unintended adverse consequences as a result. In fact,

due to zero tolerance policies, research has identified that school administrators have disproportionately disciplined student groups, such as students with disabilities (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Rausch (2006) indicated that school districts with zero tolerance policies in place incur significantly higher rates of out-of-school suspension. Today, many public schools are known for using a punitive approach, with some educators professing their belief that punishing students sends the appropriate message about what behaviors will and will not be tolerated in schools (Clemson, 2015). An opponent of these methods, Aull (2012), claimed that, since its inception, zero tolerance has not only failed students in their immediate educational pursuits, but that these failed students will feel the negative effects well into their future. Cauffman and Mulvey (2001) supported this claim by suggesting that, when students do not perceive a sense of belonging, such as often occurs for suspended students: they are more likely to exhibit problem behaviors.

Offering further support for the growing concerns over discipline in schools, Geis (2014) claimed that IDEA and zero tolerance policies conflict with one another. Students who are identified as having special education needs under IDEA are not protected when zero tolerance policies are enforced in schools. Similarly, Christle et al. (2004) supported Geis's position; citing that many educators question how our educational system could possibly promote student achievement when they deny special education students a quality education, disregarding their educational needs and rushing, instead, to deal with their behavioral issues in inappropriate ways. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2000), IDEA 1997 was amended by Congress "to ensure that a child will not be punished for behavior that is characteristic of the child's disability" (p. 9). Perhaps if

public school districts were to consider the perspectives and outcomes of students, the experiences of their guardian(s) and school administrators with the suspension process and zero tolerance, then fewer students with special needs would be faced with these interventions as their primary experience of discipline. Aull (2012) recommended that administrators and teachers make an immediate attempt to use new approaches to ensure safe schools, free of harsh, discriminatory discipline. Deconstructing the school-to-prison pipeline, preserving students' constitutional rights and convincing administrators to focus more on academic performance than controlling student behavior are three examples of Aull's (2012) recommendations. In support of Aull's (2012) research, DeMitchell and Hambacker (2016) suggested an alternative approach to zero tolerance, such as restorative justice. Utilizing this method, school administrators consider the context, the intent, and the student, as an individual, when working to address behavioral issues.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

As indicated by Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2005), school policies that were initially implemented to manage behavior and increase student achievement are now understood to foster school failure and, ultimately, serve to feed the school-to-prison pipeline. This phrase, "school-to-prison pipeline," describes the correlation between school policies and practices that result in a more punitive response to student violations of school policy that end with incarceration (Weissman, 2015). Connecting the dots before them, Scavongelli and Spanjaard (2015) indicated that school failure typically leads to incarceration. Subsequently, Schept, Wall, and Bridman (2015) continued to discuss what they identified as a system in which students are funneled from classrooms to courtroom and, eventually, to prison cells. As a result of this school-to-prison pipeline,

school discipline and the justice system are often linked together (Christle et al., 2005). Clemson (2015) recognized the cyclical nature of this particular problem, stating that students who get in trouble in school often end up in prison, as adults. Supporting this orientation, African American males who have dropped out of high school are often found to have spent time in jail or prison (Schept, Wall, and Brisman, 2015; Western, Pettit, & Guetzkow, 2002). Costenbader and Markson (1998) suggested that Black male students who were suspended from school were more likely to be involved in the legal system as a result of their suspension from school serving as the slight nudge needed to initiate negative contact with the police and the legal system.

In summary, instead of these identified students joining the workforce or pursuing a higher education, Weissman posits that these students are at greater risk for entering the criminal-justice pipeline. Inevitably, most of these students become part of an underclass of citizens whose futures exist behind prison walls, a second-class status from which it is increasingly more difficult to escape (2015).

Problem Statement

While suspending students with special needs has been shown to be ineffective at rehabilitating, educating and/or preparing students for success as adult members of society, it remains one of the most common approaches for coping with inappropriate student behavior in the United States (Christle et al., 2004). Scavongelli and Spanjaard's (2015) findings suggested that children who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school by the 10th grade and that dropping out triples the likelihood of incarceration later in life. In other words, as more students serve long-term suspensions, the prison population increases (Skiba, 2014).

Although the suspension process for students with disabilities has been extensively debated, insufficient research gives voice to the experiences of students, parent or guardian and school administrators with the long-term suspension process and the effect it has on students' futures (Fine, 1991; Giroux, 1982; Smith, 2000; Stevick & Levinson, 2003). Additional research must be conducted to learn how youth perceive themselves during, and after, long-term suspension from school in order to minimize future negative outcomes. However, the academic community has conducted sufficient research to observe that students tend to disengage, become less committed to their education once they feel they have been unjustly suspended from school (Weissman, 2015).

Therefore, this study examined the experiences of students with special needs who were long-term suspended, and also provided their parent/guardians, and school administrators with an opportunity to share their perspectives on the long-term suspension process. Primarily, this study allowed the participants to reflect on student self-efficacy and the effects of being suspended.

Theoretical Rationale

Albert Bandura has been recognized as the fifth most-frequently cited author in professional psychological journals and considered to be the one of the most distinguished psychologists of the 20th century for social learning theory (Haggbloom et al., 2002). Bandura (1993) suggested that people anticipate outcomes based on how they believe they will perform in a given situation, revealing that one's behavior can be directly linked to their level of self-efficacy. Bandura (2006) expounded, suggesting that self-efficacy beliefs influence the way people think and act, how they peruse

accomplishments and how resilient they are in the face of unexpected challenges. Therefore Bandura's self-efficacy theory is well-suited, providing a sturdy framework for this study. Through this lens, the study focuses on how student self-efficacy is affected, both academically and socially, when the students in question are suspended from school.

Self-efficacy is defined as one's perceived capability, or one's self-perceived ability, at accomplishing a task (Sullivan, 2009). Bandura (2006) also claimed that "self-efficacy beliefs are the product of a complex process of self-persuasion that rely on cognitive processing of diverse sources of efficacy information's conveyed enactively, vicariously, socially and physiologically" (Bandura, 1986, p. 115). In more general terms, self-efficacy could be viewed as a person's pursuit of creating, or enacting, greatness within. This term has also been defined as that which individuals believe they can achieve (Lee, 2005). Furthermore, Lee (2005) suggested that self-efficacy is a dynamic skill that can be honed and developed through direct experiences, such as assuming a positive mental attitude and reflecting on how one's capabilities are perceived and evaluated by others. Therefore, behavioral, physical, and mental well-being are all often affected, with various degrees of impact and severity by one's social environment, otherwise known as efficacy (Bandura, 1997b). Bandura supported the notion that individuals with strong self-efficacy have the ability, in some instances, to overcome even the most adverse of life's unpredictable situations. Therefore, self-efficacy can evince tangible effects on one's level of motivation and self-perceived capabilities (Bandura, 1993).

In another interpretation, self-efficacy has been described as an individual's interpretation of what they believe they are capable of accomplishing, often affected, for

better or for worse, by life events (Bandura, 1994). Combining their research efforts Bandura and Locke (2003) suggested that perceived self-efficacy is measured by the strengths of one's beliefs and how one interprets one's own capabilities. The two researchers went on to explain that perceived self-efficacy encompasses the different ways in which individuals perceive their own abilities. Bandura (2006) recognized that it is impossible for an individual to master every realm of human life because perceived self-efficacy is developed by, dependent upon, and limited to one's lived experiences. For example, individuals who doubt their own capabilities often give up on their goals with little resistance (Bandura, 1993). Additionally, several other studies support Bandura's finding that one's perceived self-efficacy informs much of human development (Boyer et al., 2000; Holden, 1991; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990; Moritz, Feltz, Fahrbach, & Mack, 2000; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Sadri & Robertson, 1993).

Since the 1970s, educators have given concerted attention to how a student's self-perception effects his or her motivation and persistence, as well as academic performance (Salkind, 2008). Researchers have discovered that students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to persist when completing classroom tasks; such increased levels of self-efficacy can even affect future performance (Salkind, 2008). Bandura (1989) noted that a student's self-efficacy could have different effects and outcomes. He further posited that a chosen activity will most likely be successfully completed when the individual has a stronger sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

On the other side of the successes that were revealed and explained, researchers were beginning to gain insight into sources of student difficulty. Salkind (2008) reported

that students who experienced continual failure often adopt a sense of inadequacy. Bandura had specifically noted that an adolescent's robust or underdeveloped perceived self-efficacy, could improve or inhibit the way the student manages school and avoid inappropriate behaviors, respectively (Betz, 2008).

In the United States of America, public education serves as primary setting for the development of child self-efficacy skills (Bandura, 1994). In virtually every case, the school experience is detrimental or beneficial to the growth of an individual's self-efficacy. Pajares and Urdan (2006) carefully examined multiple social structures, challenges, and environmental experiences commonly encountered by young adults. The research duo focused their research emphasis on understanding how those encounters affect their self-efficacy while they are in school. For some students, as soon as they are provided an opportunity to make their own choices, they are more likely to select tasks that they believe they are capable of accomplishing, choosing to avoid those that they believe are beyond their potential (Valiante & Urdan, 2006).

Bandura (1994) supported that an individual's self-efficacy, confidence, coping abilities and how an individual understands one's capabilities, could potentially affect the decisions that students make. Bandura claimed that students are often challenged to stay socially appropriate as they face significant academic struggles, often to the detriment of their intellectual efficacy. For example, students classified with a learning disability often have a low sense of self-efficacy because of the academic demands that inevitably cause depression and anxiety (Bandura, 1993). In addition, children who see themselves as unable to accomplish the desired task, commonly display symptoms of low self-worth. These beliefs can affect many aspects of student life. When children don't believe in

their ability to succeed, they tend to choose the easiest path and exert minimal effort when faced with challenging circumstances. Furthermore, whether their thought patterns are helpful or not; particular considerations must be made for the varying levels of experienced stress and depression.

Bandura (1993) reported that a student's self-efficacy directly affects his or her aspirations, motivation, and academic performance. He also claimed that students with low self-efficacy also have a more difficult time recovering from their setbacks, spend more time dwelling on their inadequacies, and, more often than their peers, lose faith in their capabilities when experiencing a school suspension. In many cases, students encounter opportunities to learn how to successfully navigate problematic situations. On the other hand, Bandura claimed that any factor that influences choice behavior could impact a person's development, because the social influences that surround competence, value, and interest can have a long-lasting effect. His research found that students who are not academically and/or socially successful tend to gravitate to peers that similarly de-prioritize education. Additionally, Bandura (1993) discovered that students who struggle socially and academically often display anger through physical and verbal aggression.

Adding to his initial assertions on the subject, Bandura (1993) claimed that a low perceived self-efficacy not only affects the way students feel and act, but through his continued research (1994), he asserted that students who possess a low assurance of their capabilities, commonly exacerbated by school suspension, often dwell on their personal deficiencies and on the obstacles they have before them. According to Bandura (1993) in order for students to move beyond situational demands, have resilience to their inevitable

failures, and their social repercussions, students must develop a strong sense of efficacy. As a result, situational outcomes differ based on people's beliefs in their efficacy (Badura, 1997). Consequently, the level of resiliency individuals are willing to exert when faced with challenging circumstances, such as being suspended from school, can be improved or diminished by one's self-efficacy.

Statement of Purpose

The study sought to examine the long-term suspension process and experience for students classified with an emotional disturbance. Through semi-structured interviews, this study's research offers a firsthand perspective on whether the long-term suspension process detracts from, or improves students' identity, the overall school experience, and any future ambitions. The findings and implications of this study may be helpful to policy makers, educators, and the public in that they examine what effects, if any, the long-term suspension process and school policies have on the lives of students with disabilities.

Research Questions

Given the lack of research on the voices of students with special needs, parent/guardians, and school administrators regarding the long-term suspension process, further study is needed. Weissman (2015) suggested that additional research on student, parent, and school administration's perceptions could potentially modify the suspension process and the outcomes of suspensions (Moustakas, 1994; Bandura, 1997). The research questions for this study were:

1. What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?

2. What, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension?

The research questions were examined using Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

Potential Significance of the Study

The suspension of students with special needs has been a phenomenon in American public schools for over the last four decades. A thorough review of literature reveals an abundance of information on the disproportionate rate of suspensions for students with disabilities, though it is couples with regrettable dearth of information on the perspectives of students with disabilities, their parent/guardians, and school administrators. Klingbeil, and Van Norman (2013), through a multilevel analysis, investigated how sociodemographics and school characteristics can influence a student's risk of suspension, discovering that students with disabilities were being disproportionately represented. However, because of the lack of understanding surrounding student, parent/guardians, and administrative perspectives, further studies must be dedicated to learning about the combined perceptions and effects of being long-term suspended.

A study designed to answer these questions would hopefully add to the body of knowledge on the perceptions of long-term suspensions and would possibly provide information on the unique experiences of students, their families and school administrators. The results of this study recommend improvements in school practices and policies for students with disabilities. Findings from this study seek to improve the current long-term suspension process.

Definitions of Terms

Emotional Disturbance (ED) – A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's academic achievement: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or other health factors; inability to build, establish and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; improper types of behavior or feelings under normal situations, general mood of unhappiness or depression; tendency to establish physical symptoms or fears associated with school personnel or school related issues ("United States," 2015; New York State Education Department, 2018).

Free Appropriated Public Education (FAPE) – This term is used to ensure the right of every student to an appropriate educational program that will meet his/her individual needs. FAPE may also include specially designed instruction in all academic settings (public or private schools, home and alternative programs) as well as providing related services in (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) – A process of determining the cause of behavior before creating a behavioral intervention plan (Sacks, 2001).

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – An IEP is a student's individualized education plan that includes the following information: demographics, classification, special alerts, current levels of performance, annual goals, program and related services (Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow & Coleman, 2006).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - Legislation regulating the methods by which schools are allowed to discipline students with disabilities (Hartwig &

Ruesch, 2000). This act mandates that each school district report data referencing the suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities to the U.S. Secretary of Education (IDEA, 2004, Section 618).

Long-term Suspension (LTS) – When a student is recommended for removal from school for more than 5 consecutive days (New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, n.d.).

Long-term Suspension Hearing - The student and the student's parent or guardian have the right to participate in a fair hearing where evidence related to the incident is presented. The authorized individual who conducts the hearing is responsible for identifying the facts of the incident and making a recommended penalty to the district superintendent. The superintendent makes the final determination as to the duration and location of where the student will serve their long-term suspension (New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, n.d.).

Manifestation Determination (MD) – Under IDEA, students with special needs who have been suspended for 10 days or are being recommended for a long-term suspension are required to have a manifestation determination meeting to determine whether the student's behavior has a direct or substantial relationship to the student's disability, as well as ensure the student's program and services are implemented (McLaughlin, 2009).

Procedural Due Process Safeguards: In the case of suspension, a student's right to be notified of an impending suspension or expulsion, coupled with an opportunity to explain one's version of a disciplinary incident in a fair and impartial hearing (Hartwig and Ruesch, 1994).

School Climate: Refers to the quality of relationships between students, school faculty, and organizational structures and experiences of life socially, emotionally, academically, and ethically (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Emmons, 1993; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

School-to-Prison Pipeline – A link between educational exclusion and the criminalization of youths (Wilson, 2014).

Students with Disabilities/Special Needs –Students with a disability, as defined in section 4401(1) of NYS Educational Law, who is under the age of 21 prior to September 1st and who is entitled to attend public schools pursuant to section 3202 of Educational Law and whose mental, physical or emotional challenges negatively impact the student's overall academic performance. These students have been identified as having a disability that requires schools to provide specialized programs, services and accommodations. For the purpose of this dissertation, the terms students with disabilities and students with special needs will be referenced interchangeably ("Special Education", 2016).

Suspension – A disciplinary action that requires a student to be absent from the classroom or school building for a specified period of time (Cobb-Clark et al., 2014).

Transfer to Interim Alternative Education Setting (IAES): Transfer to an alternative setting outside of the student's home school to which the student is referred as a part of, or in lieu of, disciplinary action (http://www.p12.nysed.gov).

Zero tolerance – Refers to strict, uncompromising, and automatic punishment to eliminate undesirable behaviors (Wilson, 2014).

Chapter Summary

As noted, suspending students from school, whether on a short-term or long-term basis, is not a new phenomenon (Skiba et al., 2008). Rather it has become one of the most common approaches for coping with inappropriate student behavior in the United States (Christle et al. 2004). At this time, a disproportionate rate of students with special needs are disciplined and suspended from school (Scavongelli & Spanjaard, 2015) despite the additional rights these students have under IDEA. Findings suggest that children who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school by the 10th grade (Scavongelli & Spanjaard, 2015). As indicated by Christle et al. (2005), school policies, which were initially implemented to manage behavior and increase student achievement are now fostering school failure and directing already at- risk students into a burgeoning school-to-prison pipeline.

Due to the lack of rigorous research on the specific perspectives of students, parent/guardians, and school administrators on how discipline practices affect everyone involved, additional efforts must be undertaken to study these perceptions, with a particular focus on the effects of the long-term suspension process for students classified with an emotional disturbance. A study has been designed to answer these specific questions and seeks to add to the body of knowledge on the effects of long-term suspensions while illuminating the unique experiences of students, parent/guardians, and school administrators. Furthermore, this research endeavors to improve school practices and policies in regard to students with disabilities. Additionally, the findings from this research may assist with the review and reform of the current long-term suspension

process for all students, particularly students with special needs. The next chapter will analyze, compare, and synthesize salient prior research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 examines long-term suspension processes for students in American public schools, with the literature review providing the contextual background necessary to understand the history, effects, and outcomes of suspension. This review assumes a particular focus on students with special needs evidenced in prior research. First, this chapter examines the disproportionality of suspension of students with special needs, potential reasons for the perceived disproportionality, and patterns and predictors to suspension. Next, the chapter reports recent research related to suspending students with special needs, particularly students classified with an emotional disturbance. Then the chapter provides research related to the impact of suspension, school climates, variations in academic instruction, long-term impacts, and student perceptions of the interim alternative educational settings. Finally, the chapter weighs research on both sides of the debates surrounding suspension, school climate, alternatives to suspension, and self-efficacy. The literature review serves to frame the questions being investigated in this study. The research questions for this study were:

1. What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?
2. What, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension?

The research questions were examined using Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

Suspension Disproportionality for Students with Special Needs

Several researchers have found that students classified with disabilities are notably overrepresented and are at a disproportionately higher risk of suspension than non-disabled peers (Brown & DiTillio, 2013; Lillian, Cornell & Fan, 2011; Fabelo et al., 2011; McElderry & Cheng, 2014; Sullivan & Bal, 2013; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2014; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin 2012; Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2007). During the 2011-2012 school year, the United States Office for Civil Rights released data that indicated students with disabilities were more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than students without disabilities. The following year, students classified with a disability were also found to have been suspended twice as often as non-disabled students (Losen & Gillespie, 2000). *The Need to Rethink Discipline,* a 2016 White House report, described the worrisome and persistent trend of *s*tudents with disabilities continued to be more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as students not classified with a disability. As a result of the mounting evidence of disproportionality, it is clear that special education students in the United States continue to be suspended at a disproportionate rate.

Fabelo et al. (2011) analyzed the quantity of suspensions over a 5 year period, finding that, while 75% of students with disabilities were subjected to at least one suspension, only 54% of non-disabled students were suspended. More specifically, racial disparity was acknowledge and discovered in Sullivan et al. (2014) quantitative study. Illustrating their allegation of racial disparity, this research group reported that, while just 25% of the suspended special education population was Caucasian, 68% of the suspended special education population was found to be African American. Furthermore, Duncan

and Johnson (2014) found that students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive one or more suspensions when compared to students without disabilities.

Reasons for Disproportionality

Recent studies have revealed some of the underlying causes of the phenomenon of disproportionate suspensions for students with special needs. One such reason was identified in national studies conducted by Cusson (2010) and Pazey and Cole (2013), respectively. Both studies found that school administrators commonly received very little, training for working with students with special needs. In addition, Skiba et al. (2014) conducted a multilevel examination, the findings of which were consistent with previous studies (Advancement Project, 2000; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Edl, & Rausch, 2007); further advising that a principal's orientation toward school discipline often reveals a significant impact on the school's suspension rate. In other words, the suspension rate for students was lower in schools where the administration favored restorative and preventative alternatives (Skiba et al., 2014).

Another potential reason for disproportionality is that school administrators, having already been identified as significantly under-trained for interacting with students with disabilities, are too often required to apply their personal discretion when determining disciplinary consequences for students with disabilities (Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Peterson 1999). Williams, Pazey, Shelby, and Yates (2013) analyzed 21 articles from psychological and educational databases in order to better understand school administrators' perceptions of students with disabilities. Their research revealed that school administrators regularly adopt a negative perception of students with special needs, unfairly and inaccurately purporting that this subset of their student population

threatened their values, job performance, available time, teacher relations, and financial security, all while contributing to the already limited and overburdened pool of human resources. These findings allude to preconceived negative beliefs that school administrators have concerning the impact of students with special needs. These implications serve as a potential underlying factor in the disproportionate rate of exclusionary discipline for students with disabilities.

Patterns and Predictors to Suspension

Seeing the need for greater scrutiny in this area, the research group Sullivan et al. (2014) attempted to gain clarity on the patterns and predictors for out-of-school suspensions among students with disabilities. Particularly, these researchers were interested in determining whether discipline, in the aforementioned instances, was disproportionately applied due to the severe behavioral needs of these students, or whether the disparities were due to school administrators' lack of training and resources and overreliance on exclusionary discipline. Kim, Losen, and Hewitt (2010) and Sullivan et al. (2014) found that the disproportionate rate of suspensions was a clear indication that schools, too often, fail to meet the unique needs of students classified with special needs, and that schools were denying these students their constitutionally-protected free and appropriate education.

Data retrieved from the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study laid the groundwork for Zhou, Duran, Frew, Kwok, & Benz (2011) to investigate how students' social skills are impacted by suspension, using parent interviews, teacher and administrator questionnaires, and direct observation of students. The findings revealed that students who were rated as having lower social skills had a significantly higher

chance of facing disciplinary actions, such as suspension from school. For instance, students identified as ED were 10 times more likely to be rated as having low social skills by teachers and parents. However, students classified with a learning disability were 2.5 times more likely to be rated as having high social skills (Zhou et al., 2011). Interestingly, the study by Zhou et al. (2011) also revealed that students rated, by parents and teachers, as having low social skills were 12.5 times more likely to receive a suspension than students with high social skills. Additional research has found that African American, male students who are classified with an emotional or behavioral disability, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), commonly registered lower social skills and a higher chance of experiencing disciplinary removal (Achilles et al., 2007; Kaufman et al., 2010; Krezmein et al., 2006; Skiba et al., 1997; Townsend, 2000; Wagner et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2004). Moreover, students with disabilities were more likely to face disciplinary actions because of their limited social skills, social judgment, and planning (Mayer, & Leone, 2007). The focus on students having low social skills is significant because it raises the question of whether schools have established appropriate supports and behavioral expectations for the development and/or improvement of the social skills of these students. If schools provide appropriate support and interventions when warranted, then, perhaps, the rate of suspension would decrease, along with any observed instances of disparity (Allman & Slate, 2013; Anyon et al., 2014).

Suspending Students with Special Needs

Several studies have examined disciplinary exclusions of students with special needs. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Education, found that students with special needs continue to be disproportionately suspended despite state and federal laws that are designed to minimize such school expulsions (Sullivan et al. 2014**).** Along the same lines of research, Aull (2012) noted that recent data trends were reporting discrepancies for disabled students who were continuing to be negatively affected by punitive school discipline policies. As a result of overwhelming evidence concerning the disproportionality of suspensions for students with special needs, the Department of Education and Department of Justice have been actively investigating this crisis (Ayana, Triplett, & Lewis, 2014; Wright et al., 2014).

According to the New York City Civil Liberties Union and Student Safety Coalition (2011), half of students enrolled in the New York City public schools who were classified as learning disabled or having emotional disabilities, accounted for 80% of the suspensions of students with disabilities. Cartlege, Tillman, and Johnson (2001) suggested that students with special needs are discriminated against and unfairly targeted for suspension, creating and exacerbating an ethical dilemma. Additional studies found that students classified as ED are more likely to be suspended than students in other disability categories (Fabeo et al., 2011; Krezmein et al., 2006; Rausch, Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Skiba, 2006; Sullivan & Bal, 2013; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, & Epstein, 2005; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004). Although procedural guidelines have been initiated in order to minimize the suspension rate for students with special needs, these laws seem insufficient when considering the continuation of such discrepancies.

Students Classified with an Emotional Disturbance

Over the last three decades, suspension rates for students classified as ED have risen (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2007). Furthermore, students classified ED often struggle with establishing and maintaining relationships with peers and educators (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Nowicki, 2003; Tyler-Wood, Cereijo, & Pemberton, 2004). Additionally, they often demonstrate noncompliant behaviors that impede their ability to learn (Lane, 2007; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). A 3 year qualitative study by Little et al. (2010) found that students classified with behavioral challenges, whether educated in urban or suburban settings, had similar academic and intervention needs. Additional studies found that students classified ED, who did not receive the appropriate level of support, often experienced poor peer and teacher relationships, lacked academic success, experienced depression, and, ultimately suspension. These difficulties have been found to contribute to leading the bulk of this troubled population directly into the juvenile system (Bullis & Yovanoff, 2006; Wagner et al., 2006).

Since the 1980s, suspension rates for students classified as ED have risen nearly 50% (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2007). Zhang, Katsiyannis, and Herbst (2004) drew data from the Annual Reports to Congress on the implementation of IDEA in the 4 year period from 1998-2002 learning that students who were classified as ED had the highest suspension rate when compared to other students with different special education classifications. Wagner et al. (2005) also found disproportionate suspension rates for students with ED. Similar to the U.S. national average, multiple researchers reported that students classified ED were 9 times more likely to be suspended for similar behaviors compared to students with other classifications, such as other health impairment (OHI) or

learning-disabled students (McElderry & Cheng, 2014; Sullivan et al. 2014; Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2007). More recently, Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013) assessed a Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) and found that the majority of students classified with an emotional disturbance were suspended on multiple occasions while enrolled in elementary school. Furthermore, the 2004 National Longitudinal Transition Study revealed that suspension, expulsion, academic failure, retention, and school dropout are commonly encountered impediments in the lives of students with emotional or behavioral disorders (Wagner, Newman, & Cameto, 2007; Dahlberg, 2001).

Impact of Suspension

Continuous suspension of students with special needs contributes to academic learning gaps, increased rates of exclusion, increased likelihood of student dropout, and denial of procedural protections (Arcia, 2006; Brownstein, 2010; Carter, Fine, & Russell, 2014; Christle et al., 2005; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt (2010); Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, Cohen, 2014; Suh, Suh, & Housten, 2007; 2010). For example, Suh and Suh (2007) conducted a national longitudinal study identifying 16 of the most significant contributors to students dropping out of school. Through their research, they found that students who had a prior history of suspension increased the likelihood of their dropping out of school by 78%. Similarly, Christle et al. (2004) mixed-methods study found a significant correlation between high suspension rates, and school dropout rates. Other researchers suggest that the overuse of suspension, and the corresponding decrease of educational access for students with special needs, directly contributes to the over representation of young adults in the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt,

2010, 2012; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Pantoja, 2013; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014).

Christie et al. (2004) reported significant differences in student achievement between students who were, and were not suspended, partially due to their gap in education. Following after what they perceived as unanswered questions, Allman and Slate (2013) conducted a quantitative study that analyzed the correlation between students classified (ED, LD or OHI) who received a disciplinary consequence; such as in-school suspension, out of school suspension, or assigned to an alternative educational placement and their achievement on statewide reading and math assessments. Their study revealed that students demonstrated significantly lower reading and math scores compared to similarly classified students who did not receive an out-of-class or program consequence (Allman & Slate, 2013). For example, students classified ED, who were assigned to attend an alternative education setting while serving their suspension, had a lower mean score in reading and math than their peers who were also classified ED but did not attend an alternative program. Additional research has linked school suspension to poor performance on cognitive tests in math, science, and social studies (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Additionally, Arcia (2006) conducted a 2 year quasi-experiment, uncovering a nearly a 5 year grade level gap between students who were suspended, and students who were not suspended. Based on the presented research, suspending students with special needs negatively impacts their academic growth and overall performance.

Predictors and Patterns of Behaviors for Students Classified with an Emotional Disturbance

Over the last few decades, multiple studies have shown that students who demonstrate social competence deficits are at greater risk for demonstrating inappropriate behaviors at school (Newman et al., 1996; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1997). Particularly, students classified with an emotional disturbance often demonstrate an intensified behavior that typically occurs at an inappropriate time and place, often adversely affecting educational performance (Behavioral Health Collaborative, 2010; Pryor, 2012). Often, these students cannot covey their feelings and struggle with appropriately communicating with others. As a result, many of these students struggle with maintaining satisfactory relationships with peers and adults. Accordingly, students with an emotional disturbance often demonstrate a range of verbal and physical aggression, low frustration tolerance, and/or social withdrawal (Algozzine, Schmid & Conners, 2017; Pryor, 2012).

Climate of Interim Alternative Educational Setting for Suspended Students (IAES)

The climate in the location where students are expected to serve their long-term suspension, otherwise known as an interim alternative educational setting, has been the cause for concern from researchers through the years. Even though Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) found that the quality of the school facility exerts a direct effect on student achievement. Harvard Civil Rights (2000) subsequent research revealed that most alternative suspension sites were nothing more than holding pens, usually physically deplorable and grossly insufficient for stimulating at-risk students while they serve suspension. Harvard Civil Rights (2000) also found that students attending the alternative programs were alienated from their home school and denied quality instruction, often exacerbating hostility toward school. Furthermore, the New York City

Civil Liberties Union & Student Safety Coalition (2011) found that parents commonly refused to send their children to an alternative suspension site, due to the unfamiliarity of the neighborhood. After reviewing the compiled research, it is clear that the overall climate, location, and physical environment of alternative suspension sites exert a significant impact on the perspectives of those involved with the overall suspension experience.

Academic Instruction at Interim Alternative Educational Setting

Although some optimism has been expressed about the quality of instruction when students attend IAES (Kemerer & Walsh, 2010), concerns persist about the lack of quality instruction and poor academic outcomes for students with disabilities (Allman & Slate, 2013; 2003; Teplin, et al., 2002). For example, Waters-Maze (2002) examined suspension and academic achievement data from the 2001-2002 school year, for slightly over 500 students in grades 6 through 11 and found a statistically negative correlation. Through qualitative research, Weissman (2015) reported that students were often denied adequate instruction, blaming the modified schedule and lack of educational opportunities and resources for the gaps and lags.

Brown and Beckett, (2007) and Weissman (2015) reported that educators in these alternative programs were ineffective, showing little accountability for their teaching, or for student success. Even further research by Harvard Civil Rights (2000), found students who attended an alternative school, while serving their suspensions, reported they received no direct instruction from their teachers. Specifically, students reported that their IAES teachers acted more like classroom monitors that distributed worksheets and that there was no formal teaching occurring. Students even reported that they

watched videos all day and they did not feel as if they had learned anything during their time. These alternative suspension sites all too regularly seem to offer low quality instruction, ineffective educators and school administrators, too often missing the opportunity to positively impact student achievement.

Long-Term Impact of Interim Alternative Educational Setting

Weissman's (2015) qualitative research also claimed that students who attended one of the previously-discussed alternative suspension sites had a high school dropout rate of nearly 90%. Kemerer and Walsh (2010) and Allman and Slate (2013), noted that students who attended an IAES had lower mean scores for reading and math than students who were not suspended. This correlation indicated a relationship between the academic achievement of students and the consequences of school disciplinary outcomes. The New York City Civil Liberties Union & Student Safety Coalition (2011) used suspension data from the NYC Department of Education, which analyzed 449,513 suspensions from 1999 through 2009. Their research found that many students did not even receive credit for the work they completed while attending the IAES, understandably impacting their grades and, eventually, their long-term academic achievements. Even further, their study revealed that approximately 60% of all suspensions occurred when students were in eighth through 10th grades. These students, who were repeatedly suspended, were so far behind academically that they felt that dropping out was their only option (The New York City Civil Liberties Union & Student Safety Coalition, 2011). As a result, this lack of communication, combined with poor educational outcomes, caused irreparable gaps in overall student educational achievement.

Student Perceptions of Interim Alternative Educational Setting

Few studies have been conducted to examine the students' perceptions of fairness of school discipline. Through a hierarchical regression analysis, the research group of Lillian, Cornell, and Gregory (2011) found that students who were suspended from school, often reported feeling unwanted in the school as a result of their suspension, affecting their perceptions of the school community and chopping away at an already flagging sense of commitment to their education. Similar findings were noted by Drakeford (2006), and Finn and Servoss (2014), discovering that students who experienced multiple failures, academically and socially became increasingly disengaged from school. They also reported that school rules and expectations were unreasonable, eroding their sense of belonging to the school community. Students who participated in Kupchick and Ellis's (2007) study reported that school rules were perceived as being fairer when school safety officers were present, as opposed to police officers. It has also been noted through recent studies that African American and Hispanic students perceived school policies to be less fair for them than Caucasian students (Johnson, Arumi, & Ott, 2006; Kupchik & Ellis, 2007). Costenbader and Markson (1998) conducted a narrative review that surveyed students' perspectives on suspension and revealed that most students reported that their likelihood to commit repeat offenses had only very minimally been impacted, if at all, as a result of the discipline they received.

Suspension does not diminish the likelihood of being a repeat offender; furthermore, there are actually negative effects of being suspended (Long, Fecser, & Brendtro, 1998). Lillian et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study using hierarchical regression analyses on the correlation of high school dropout and suspension rates. As

hypothesized, the results of this study revealed that high use of suspension from school, negatively impacted successful completion of school for students (Lillian et al., 2011). For example, schools that usually suspended about 22% of their students, during an academic school year, had a dropout rate that was 56% greater than the schools that suspended only 9% of their student population (Lillian et al., 2011). The authors of this study suggested that not allowing students to attend school could negatively affect their perceptions of school, which detracts from their commitment to receiving an education.

Supporters of Suspension

Although substantial research exists that warns against suspension, there have been studies that have suggested the need for, and benefits of, school suspension. Binder (1996) and King (1996), supported the idea that students should be held accountable for their behaviors, in order to establish an expectation of what is socially acceptable be established. Undaunted by the contrary, research has accumulated over the last two decades, where school administrators and teachers continue to express their support for suspending students. For instance, there is growing evidence that educators and school administrators feel threatened and fear becoming victims of student violence (Dworkin, Haney, & Telschow, 1988; Novotney, 2009). Ewing (2000) claimed that teachers and school administration believed that suspending students from school deterred student misbehavior while ensuring the safety and overall well-being of the school.

Using a mixed-methods approach to their research, Christle et al. (2004) examined the correlation between school characteristics and suspension rates for 40 middle schools in Kentucky. Using MANOVA, 20 schools with the highest and 20 schools with the lowest suspension rates were examined. In addition, four schools from

each of the two groups participated in administrative surveys, faculty interviews, and on-site observations (Christle et al., 2004). Specifically, the researchers reported a significant correlation between law violations and the use of suspension as a means of ensuring the safety of the school community. Christle et al. (2004) suggested that students who violate the law on school grounds do so at the peril of others within the school community: and that, therefore, those students should not be permitted on school grounds.

Additionally, it has been reported that, when students misbehave, they not only disrupt the educational process, but they also limit the amount of instructional time in the classroom for themselves and other students (Alillianm & Moles, 1993; Dukes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007; Gottfredson et al., 2000; Public Agenda, 2004). Some researchers reported that suspensions ensured that other students would have the opportunity to learn without disruption (Noguera, 2003), that they would be free to concentrate in class (Glew et al., 2005; Hanish & Guerra, 2002), engage in class activities (Buhs et al., 2006; Ladd, 2004), and improve class attendance (Buhs et al., 2006; Chen, 2007).

Joining the movement of similarly focused research, two separate research groups: Altonji, Elder, and Taber (2005), and Cobb-Clark et al. (2014) also found that being suspended was unlikely to have a negative effect on a student's future academic performance; therefore, they found no significant negative effect on the suspended student. Furthermore, Kemerer and Walsh (2010) reported that IAES could provide an educational environment for learning in which problematic behavior could be simultaneously addressed. Additionally, students attending IAES could be provided with opportunities to receive additional support such as tutoring and counseling services, to

promote effective decision-making (Henderson & Guy, 2016; Henry & Huizinga, 2007). As noted, some researchers purport that some students might find an academic, social, and emotional benefit to serving their suspension in an alternative site.

Individuals Opposed to Suspension

In contrast, substantial research found that some parents, educational advocates, and civil rights groups strongly believe that suspension negatively affects academic performance. Many also argue that suspension is an antiquated practice that does not prohibit repeated disciplinary infractions, leads to school disengagement, may produce lifelong negative effects, and negatively impacts the overall school climate (Arcia, 2006; Losen & Gillespie, 2000; Noam & Skiba, 2001). Adding to the literature against suspension for school discipline, the research group Sullivan et al. (2014) suggested that continually suspending students with special needs was an ineffective approach to dealing with discipline. Weissman's (2015) qualitative research interviewed suspended students, giving them an opportunity to express their experiences. The researcher found disparity among race, class, and gender. One student in this study, for example, shared the trauma of being labeled as troubled and/or worthless. Weissman (2015) argued that since suspension is not a deterrent, and since it rarely results in improved behavior, the efficacy of the procedure should be questioned.

Further support for moving away from traditional school discipline, Arum (2003), analyzed court decisions from all state and federal appellate cases involving school discipline. Specifically, 6,277 cases from 1946-1992 were examined and identified that variations with court decisions from 1,200 cases (Arum, 2003). Through research, Arum identified that variation in court decisions was related to disciplinary changes in school,

impacting student academic performance, and social and emotional well-being. Arum's (2003) study noted that traditional disciplinary measures were failing America's student population in that they seemed counterproductive, prevented individual creativity, created resentment towards school, and were detrimental to the students' overall educational growth. Specifically, the study revealed that excessively punishing and excluding students was ineffective and even toxic, not only to the student being disciplined, but to the entire school community as well (Arum, 2003).

The consensus of current researchers is that suspending students with special needs denies them the equal educational opportunities and access to educational services through forced exclusion (Allman & Slate, 2013; Christle et al., 2004; Hoffman, 2014; Krezmien, Leone & Achilles, 2006; Martinez, Treger & McMahon, 2015). For example, between 2008 and 2011, Perry and Morris (2015) used a large longitudinal dataset, from a metropolitan school district in Kentucky, to contrast the student achievement levels between suspended students and students who were not suspended from school. Their study identified a correlation between disciplinary consequences and student academic performance. Within the 17 schools that participated in this study, each school issued an average of 93.7 suspensions per semester. Overall, this study found a significant relationship between suspensions and academic performance. They reported limited growth in reading and math achievement that even led to further decline when students served multiple suspensions. In other words, as suspensions increased academic achievement declined. Perry and Morris (2015) suggested that the establishment of a culture of control by school administrators and teachers, and its reliance on suspension,

hurt student's academic achievement. Even non-suspended students were affected, as the climate fostered anxiety and distrust for entire school communities.

In addition, data collected over the last two decades, regarding the outcomes of suspending students from school, have failed to demonstrate that the punitive methods of school discipline serve to keep our schools and streets safe or reduce inappropriate behavior (Hemphill et al., 2006; Skiba, 2014). Additionally, school suspensions have not been found to promote appropriate school behavior, reduce undesirable behaviors, or improve school climate (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Bears, 2008; Dodge & Lansford, 2006; Rausch & Skiba, 2005). For example, placing suspended students together with other students of varying anti-social tendencies can exacerbate inappropriate behaviors rather than improve them (Dodge & Lansford, 2006). Additionally, through a meta-analysis study, Maugin and Loeber (1996), determined that suspension from school negatively impacted the academic culture of the school. They also found that suspensions did little to reduce reoccurring problem behaviors. Furthermore, Mayer and Leone (2007) reported that discipline measures such as suspension and the use of additional security measures, are perceived as characteristics of a poor school climate.

Regardless of the high costs of suspension, suspending students does not deter recidivism of the act for which they were suspended (McCord et al., 2000; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1999). On the contrary, Costenbader and Markson (1998) found that suspending students can exert the following negative effects: student's self-image can be impeded, students can disconnect from school, and choose to associate more often with other delinquent youth, not to mention the substantial loss of instruction that

suspended students must overcome. Another study reported that school suspension costs a state $3.5 million a year. The loss of student attendance led to questions concerning why school districts would implement such expensive disciplinary measures if the outcomes were not benefiting students (Christle et al., 2004). Along these lines, Christle et al. (2004) suggested that students who are suspended often repeated grades and were more likely to drop out of school.

School Climate

Containing and comprising so many facets and aspects, no single definition of school climate is readily available. However, for the purposes of this literature review, school climate will refer to the quality of relationships between students, school faculty, and organizational structures (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Emmons, 1993; Thapa et al., 2013). Over the past three decades, extensive research has suggested that, when suspensions are minimal, student self-concept is high (Cairns, 1987; Heal, 1978; Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990; Reynolds, Jones, Leger, & Murgatroyd, 1980; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006) and the school climate is viewed as positive (Lillian, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). Through focus group discussions, Siegle, Rubenstein, and Mitchell's (2014) qualitative study found overwhelming evidence that student interest and motivation was linked to the nature of the experiences and relationships that were fostered with their teachers, inevitably impacting academic achievement. Specifically, they demonstrated that teachers who are highly effective, passionate, and hardworking could influence student self-efficacy while building positive relationships with them. Additionally, this study revealed that students reported that they felt as though they learned best when their

teachers delivered their instruction with passion (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014). Therefore, the quality of relationships students have with their teachers, and other faculty members, is a critical component to student academic performance, as well as behavior.

A few recent studies investigated how students perceive school climate. A quantitative study by Shirley and Cornell (2012) used a school-climate survey and student-discipline records to examine the correlation between student perceptions of school climate and any perceptions of racially-motivated differences in school discipline. Ultimately, their study revealed that students are often resentful and disrespectful toward teachers and school administration when they perceive that they are not helped, or supported by their school. These findings are consistent with other research that found that, when students characterized school faculty as being unreasonable and untrustworthy of their authority, those students were prone to exhibit defiant behaviors at high levels and incurred high levels of disciplinary action (Drakeford, 2006; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). Clearly, how students perceive their teachers, and school administration, can impact the behavior they demonstrate.

An additional salient study, focused on school structure and climate was conducted by Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2011). More than 5,000 ninth-grade students completed school-climate surveys, in an attempt to specifically measure the characteristics of authoritative schools. These researchers found that students who expressed that their school had low academic expectations for them, and who did not feel any significant social or emotional support, were associated with a greater number of suspensions and also had increased racial disparity within discipline gaps. Although the results from this study indicated that the suspension rates varied across schools, racial

discrepancy for suspension was unsurprisingly rather consistent. All but three of the 199 schools in this study reported suspension rates for African Americans were more than double the suspension rates for White students (Gregory et al., 2011).

On the other hand, multiple other studies also determined that students who perceived that their school faculty was setting high expectations for them, was caring, listened to the students, and were seen as trustworthy, correlated to lower suspension rates (Gregory et al., 2011; Hinojosa, 2008). Brand et al. (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of 188 middle schools finding students were more likely to demonstrate appropriate school behavior when they perceived their school climate to be positive and supportive. Also, nearly 75% of students reported that having a positive, caring relationship with their teachers played a critical role in informing appropriate student behavior an conduct (Feueborn & Chinn, 2012). Christle et al. (2005) performed a mixed-methods study that revealed how schools, and school personnel could offset the many pitfalls that students encounter by the establishing a positive and beneficial school climate.

Recent studies have shown that, at schools where students perceived structure and support, there were lower rates of suspension (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010; Gregory, et al., 2011). Bracy (2011) employed an ethnographic methodology study, pulling their findings from 26 interviews and 211 direct observations, all conducted at two high schools in the Mid-Atlantic during the 2006-2007 school year. Although the two schools were approximately 20 miles apart, they represented different school districts and had notably different student body demographics. While one school was made up of White middle-class students, the other school was racially mixed, with 50% of the student population being African American and from low-income families. Interestingly,

both schools had similar security measures such as having a school safety officer. The results of this study found that schools that had safety officers, metal detectors, or even surveillance cameras, created a perception of a safer school climate. Additionally, this study reported that the use of surveillance, zero tolerance, and more significant consequences prevented students from demonstrating inappropriate behaviors (Bracy, 2011).

Although some research found that comprehensive safety measures often improved the perceived school climate, some researchers produced conflicting findings. For example, recent research studies have reported that schools with constant police presence, high-security measures, and surveillance were perceived to resemble prison environments (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010; May, 2014; Noguera, 2008; Portillos et al., 2012; Rios, 2011; Shedd, 2015, Skiba et al., 2011). Speaking in support of a consistently applied scheme of disciplining, students who participated in Bracy's (2011) study reported significant concerns about the lack of consistency of school discipline. Specifically, students expressed concerns that the consequences they received were too harsh for the act they committed, as well as reporting a feeling of powerlessness during the disciplinary process (Bracy, 2011).

Although Christle et al. (2004) revealed that school size was not found to have a significant correlation to suspension, other research supports that size and layout of a school, and its operating schedule, could impact the school climate (Conroy & Fox, 1994; Cotton, 2001; Van Acker, Grant, & Henry, 1996; Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008). The proportion of suspended African American students, when compared to Caucasian students being suspended from school, increased in larger schools (Finn & Servoss,

2014). These studies indicate that school characteristics, such as physical and social factors, are correlated to student behavior and suspension, especially for schools with higher student enrollment.

Suspension Prevention

Several recent studies in the United States have found that school-based restorative intervention approaches (RI), such as: peace circles, mediations, conferences or positive behavioral interventions, have resulted in lower suspension rates (Gonzalez, 2015; Lewis, 2009; Riestenberg, 2013). However, Foreman (2015) reported that some schools inconsistently implement new initiatives, such as RI, seemingly resulting in weakening the impact of student academic, social, and/or emotional outcomes (Jain et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). In other words, schools that committed to consistently implementing and using RI, reduced suspension rates.

Anyon et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study in a large urban school district in Denver, using prior student disciplinary records, the researchers built off of the previous study by Anyon et al. (2014). Specifically, Anyon et al. (2016) examined 180 schools in order to determine whether receiving RI during the first semester of a school year decreased the rate of suspension during the second semester. This team of researchers also focused on the disadvantaged population in search of similar patterns of implementation and participation in RI. The findings of this study supported other previous studies, indicating that restorative practices varied widely across schools and student disciplinary outcomes (Jain et al., 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008; Schulte, 2009).

Alternatives to Suspension

Marginalized students, such as special education students, should have individualized discipline, such that their relationships with the school community are protected and academic challenges are minimized (Henderson & Guy, 2016; Henderson & McClinton, 2016). Within the last two decades, it has been suggested that restructuring school disciplinary policies and providing alternatives to suspension could minimize behavioral violations (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007). In 2001, Cartledge, Tillman, and Johnson recommended that schools shift away from punitive environments and toward more supportive and helpful environments that encouraged and reinforced appropriate behavior.

Some studies have compared schools with high and low suspension rates and identified various prevention strategies (Christle et al., 2004; Irvin et al., 2004, 2006; Mendez, Knoff & Ferron, 2002; Mukuria, 2002; Safran, 2006). For instance, Hattie's (2009) research found that teachers who participated in continuous professional development that focused on modifying student behavior, particularly for students with special needs, demonstrated a reduction in student suspensions. Lillian et al. (2011), and Irvin et al. (2004, 2006) recommended social-skills training for entire school communities to reduce the number of disciplinary infractions students faced so that it would increase the likelihood of students successfully earning a high school diploma. In addition, it was also found that assisting teachers with empathy interventions, because of the professional development they have completed, are more apt, than their less-trained peers, to assist with the overall goal of lowering suspension rates (Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016).

Within the last decade, research has also revealed that teachers' perceptions

influence the implementation of behavioral prevention strategies, such as school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) (Lane et al., 2009). In 2010, Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, and Collins (2010) conducted interviews that found that, although teachers fundamentally agreed with SWPBS, they failed to provide evidence of prevention-oriented thinking. Feuerborn and Chinn's (2012) study focused on teachers' perceptions and practices when addressing the needs of their students. Although teachers expressed concerns for their students' social and emotional well-being, they indicated they did not feel prepared to address their needs in class due to lack of training. Similarly, Oliver and Reschly's (2010) research found that educators were often not trained or prepared to work with particularly challenging behaviors demonstrated by students that were classified with an emotional disturbance or with an other health impairment (Oliver & Reschly, 2010). Teachers that lack the necessary tools to support their students could be contributing to the disproportionality of suspensions for students with special needs.

More broadly, researchers have suggested that schools should provide mental health services and support in school, in schools including mental health screenings (Weist, Rubin, Moore, Adelsheim, & Wrobel, 2007) and direct services for students and their families (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). Additionally, recent research suggests a need for improved interagency collaboration when providing mental health support for students (Pires, Lazear, & Conlan, 2008). In other words, one way to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and their families, requires that all involved personnel obtain and utilize collective knowledge and work together in order to assist a student with the achievement of their goals.

In addition to the collective knowledge in support of students with disabilities, research has suggested that teachers could positively intervene and support students through classroom management techniques and interventions. Hudson-Baker (2005) conducted a quantitative study using surveys and examining teachers regarding their self-efficacy, focusing on classroom management and preparedness when implementing behavior-management techniques in order to meet the individual needs of students. The findings from Hudson-Baker's (2005) study offered a few recommendations to reduce school suspension: designating times, during the school days, for faculty to collectively problem solve; to exchange ideas with one another; to establish behavioral teams; and to create opportunities to access building-wide and district-wide support. Dawson's (2003) quasi-experimental study reported a decrease in suspensions for students classified as ED, along with an increase in school attendance, with the implementation of the Life Space Crisis Intervention program (LSCI). This empowering, therapeutic, strength-based strategy supports the school faculty, as well as the students, exposing them to more effective coping skills (Daswson, 2003).

Over the last three decades, there has been substantial research, predominantly quantitative research that found an individual's self-efficacy beliefs impacted their educational experiences (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Hampton, 1998, Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007; Phan, 2012). Additionally, extensive empirical research that has attested to the power of how one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors to impact their self-efficacy (Fast et al., 2010; Pajares, 2003; Pajares et al., 2007; Phan, 2014; William & Williams, 2010; Zafarmand, Ghanizadeh & Akbari, 2014). Over the past four decades, substantial research in the academic domain has found that students with low sense of self-efficacy

may suffer low academic motivation and performance and vice-versa (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Caprara et al., 2008; Joo, Bong, & Choi, 2000; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986, 1987; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994, 1996; Pajares & Kranzler, 1995; Stajkovic, Bandura, Locke & Lillian, 2010; Wood & Locke, 1987; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Considering that self-efficacy beliefs impact students' educational experiences, one might question the message that is sent to students when they are suspended.

Phan and Ngu (2015) assessed six major components of personal well-being. These components were otherwise referred to as self-efficacy beliefs, within the framework of social cognition (Bandura, 1986, 2012). For instance, correlational and experimental studies revealed a connection between self-efficacy on academic achievement and other school-related outcomes (Fast et al., 2010; Roman, & Cuestas, 2007; Lau, Liem & Nie, 2008; Liem, Lau & Nie, 2008; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Kranzler, 1995; Sins, Van Joolingen, Savelsbergh, & Van Hout-Wolters, 2008; Zare, Rastegar, & Hoseini, 2011). For example, Kuklinski and Weinstein (2001) found that teachers' expectations for student success had a correlation to a student's self-efficacy and academic performance. Slightly more than a decade later, Phan and Ngu's (2015) path analytical findings hinted at a correlation between one's self-efficacy and educational outcomes. Through focus groups, Siegle, Rubenstein, and Mitchell (2014) reported that teacher's personal characteristics, such as their personality, ability to establish relationships with students, and subject knowledge, directly affecting their students' self-efficacy. Clearly, there are several factors that can affect a student's self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy and Academic Performance

Bandura (1977) and other contemporary researchers (Robbins et al., 2004; Zientek & Thompson, 2010) have described student self-efficacy as the quality of students perceptions about their capabilities, such as accomplishing a task with persistence, or coping with challenging circumstances, such as school suspensions. Using path-analysis procedures, Zimmerman and Bandura (1992) assessed the socio-cognitive model of academic self-motivation and achievement through student and parent questionnaires. Specifically, Zimmerman and Bandura (1992) used the Children's Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1989) for self-regulated learning and academic achievement. As anticipated, the findings from this study indicated a correlation between perceived self-efficacy of a student, their academic performance, and the goals they set for themselves. Interestingly, findings from this study indicated that parents relied on their child's previous grades in school when creating goals for their children. However, students relied on their own self-efficacy beliefs, and their parents' aspirations, when establishing their own goals. Therefore, the experiences of students being classified with special needs, when they are suspended from school, could impact the students' self-efficacy beliefs and aspirations their parents set for them.

Additionally, Zimmerman and Bandura's (1992) findings were similar to previous research conducted by Bandura (1992), and Locke and Latham (1990), in that the higher the students perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals students established and achieved for themselves. Also worthy of note, students' previous grades were found to influence the goals they set for themselves. Zimmerman & Bandura (1992) found that

parents often rely on their children's previous grades when setting goals for them and that the goals they set for their children were significantly higher than the goals that students set for themselves. However, it was noted that students rely on the combination of their own self-efficacy and their parents' aspirations when creating personal goals.

Gaps in the Literature

Although hundreds of studies have been published, over the last 40 years, about school suspension and students with special needs, little progress has been made addressing the perspectives of ED students who have been long-term suspended from schools. In spite of this lack of progress, some research suggests a need for future qualitative studies that focus on the relationships between school discipline policies, the compliance of these policies, and how suspension affect student self-efficacy (Bracy, 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1992). Although two recent qualitative studies have assessed teacher self-efficacy (Milner & Hoy, 2003; Palmer, 2006), Usher and Pajares (2008) noted that no qualitative studies have addressed the developing self-efficacy beliefs of students. Hopefully, conducting additional qualitative studies on this topic would allow researchers to explore the experiences and perspectives of ED students who were suspended, with special consideration given to their parent/guardians and school administrators.

Summary

Although suspending students from school is the most commonly used disciplinary practice in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), students with disabilities continue to be suspended from public schools at disproportionate rates. However, it has also been noted that suspension risks may differ based on several

variables such as student classification, school climate, and perceived relationships with teachers and school administrators. For all the mixed perspectives on suspending students from school, significant data have yet to be provided such that would suggest that this form of discipline positively impacts students' academic, social, and emotional progress.

Even with several studies that reveal the overall complexity of student suspension for students with special needs, the lack of data on the subject persists, reflecting a limited understanding of the important voices and perspectives from these affected students. In recognition of this perceived limitation, further qualitative research on this topic has been recommended (Cobb-Clark et al., 2015). Specifically, a study designed to fill this gap in literature would add to the body of knowledge on perceptions of long-term suspensions and provide information on students' unique experiences. Additionally, the results of this research could potentially improve upon school practices and policies for students with disabilities. Accordingly, this study provided a unique opportunity to students with special needs, their parent/guardians and school administrators. Specifically, they were able to share their experienced with the long-term suspension process from school. This phenomenological qualitative process specifically allowed the participants to reflect on how student's self-efficacy is affected as a result of being long-term suspended.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology for this qualitative study, providing research context, study participants, instruments for data collection, and the step-by-step procedure for data collection. A description of the process for data analysis and the role of the researcher is also included in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Long-term suspension of students with special needs is a common approach to coping with inappropriate student behavior in the United States (Christle et al., 2004). Scavongelli and Spanjaard's (2015) findings suggested that, once suspended for the first time, children are three times more likely to drop out of school, by the 10th grade. Additionally, Scavongelli and Spanjaard found that dropping out triples the likelihood of incarceration, later in life.

Although suspension processes for students with disabilities have been extensively debated, little research gives voice to students, parent/guardians, and school administrators' experiences (Fine, 1991; Giroux, 1982; Smith, 2000; Stevick & Levinson, 2003). Little research has been conducted on how youth perceive themselves during and after long-term suspension from school, and how student's educational commitment deteriorates once they feel they have been unjustly suspended from school (Weissman, 2015).

Therefore, this study provided students classified with an emotional disturbance, who have been long-term suspended, their parent/guardians, and school administrators, with an opportunity to discuss the details of their experience and perspectives with long-term suspension. Participants reflected on how self-efficacy affected students' lives as a result of being suspended, as well as how being long-term suspended affected student self-efficacy. The study's phenomenological approach was used to focus on the "lived

experience" of students classified as ED who have received a long-term suspension, while also illuminating the crucial roles of parent/guardians, and school administrators (Tufford & Newman, 2010). By conducting individual interviews with students, their parent/guardians, and district administrators, the study examined a unique sampling of perspectives on long-term suspension (Bandura, 1997; Moustakas, 2010). The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?
2. What, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension?

The research questions were examined using Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

Furthermore, Creswell (2014) suggested that, because little research has been conducted on the experiences of individuals, qualitative interviews are appropriate, as an attempt to elicit views and opinions. Therefore, a semi-structured interview approach was used to explore, in detail, the experiences, motives, and opinions of those who have experienced long-term suspension (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). This narrative design was conducted using predetermined, and open-ended, interview questions that were specifically designed around the two research questions of this study (Appendix A) (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). This technique also allowed the interviewees to answer questions in whatever way they felt comfortable, choose their own words to express themselves, and freely share their experiences (Creswell, 2014).

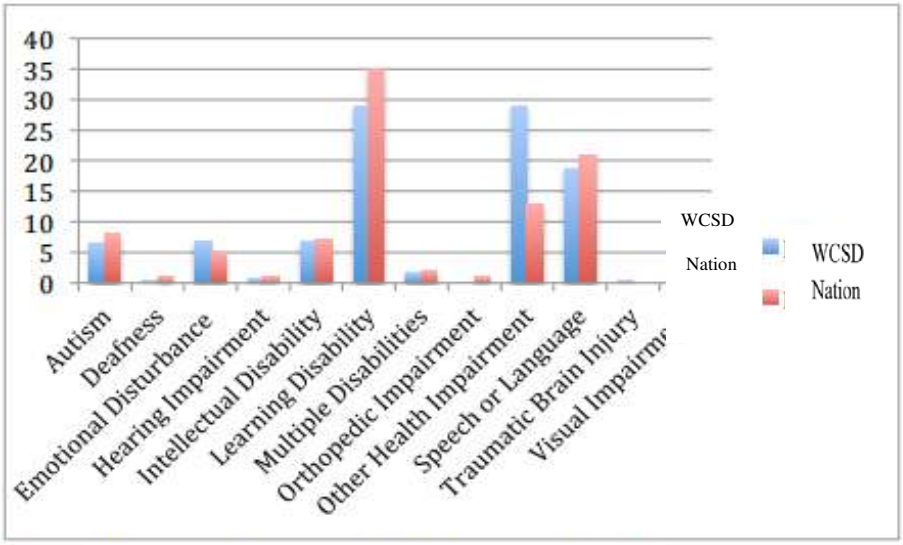
Based on the configured interviews, the phenomenological process allowed the researcher to collate meanings into a series of themes (Creswell, 2014). This chapter includes the research context, study participants, instruments for data collection, and the procedure for data collection.

Research Context

The research study took place within the Wilson City School District (WCSD) in Upstate New York. The pseudonym WCSD was assigned in place of name of the school district to ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained**.** WCSD is a district committed to establishing a culture and climate in all schools that provides students with an opportunity to receive a quality education, even when a student may be faced with serving a short-term or long-term suspension. In other words, when a student is suspended, the district is expected to provide the necessary steps to provide alternative educational instruction, as required by New York Educational Law § 3214 (New York Education, 2017).

During the 2016-2017 school year, the WCSD consisted of 50 schools. The current student enrollment, from kindergarten through 12th grade, is 27,552 students. Fifty-one percent of the current student population is male, and 49% of the population is female. Furthermore, 58% of the population is African American, while 28% is Hispanic or Latino, 10% is Caucasian, and 4% is Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (Elliot, 2017). Ninety-one percent of the students enrolled are economically disadvantaged, 86% receive free and reduced-price lunches (Elliot, 2017). Nationally, the WCSD is ranked second for highest levels of youth living in poverty, which can negatively impact school performance and behavior (Census.gov, 2017; Jensen, 2009).

The WCSD had disproportionate classification rates for students with disabilities (SWD), compared to that of other states and at the national level. Students with disabilities comprised 20% of the student population. This rate is 4.4 percentage points, or 28%, higher than the NYS rate (15.6%) and 7.1 percentage points, or 55%, higher than the national rate (12.9%), as indicated in Figure 3.1 (Elliot, 2107; IES, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017).



Source: WCSD & IES, National Center for Educational Statistics

2015-2016 WCSD & National Rates

Figure 3.1. Percent of Students Identified with a Disability by Category of Disability. Adapted from Elliot, 2017; IES, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017.

The placement rate of SWD increased 28% over the past 10 years, from 15.6% of the student population in 2006-07 to 20% in 2015-2016. The disability areas in which the WCSD is significantly above the national rate are ED (WCSD 6.9%, nation 5%), and OHI (WCSD 29%, nation 13%). The number of long-term suspensions for SWDs increased 11% during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years (Elliot, 2017).

WCSD is committed to establishing a culture and climate, in all schools, that provides all students with an opportunity to receive a quality education (Elliot, 2017). In the event a student engages in behaviors that threaten the safety of the school community, or disrupts the educational process, the student(s) may be faced with consequences, such as short-term or long-term suspension. Currently, the WCSD operates under a specific code of conduct. This code of conduct seeks to minimize the quantity of suspensions within the district. It is important to note that the WCSD was one of two NYS school districts that did not meet the target rate to limit suspensions of more than 10 days to 2.7 % of their students with disabilities, during the 2015-2016 school year ("New York," 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Approval from the Institutional Review Board at St. John Fisher College (SJFC) and the WCSD was obtained. The researcher completed the Human Subjects Research: Social-Behavioral Educational Basic online course through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. Following all appropriate guidelines, informed consent was obtained from individual participants before conducting the interviews. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the data collection process, how confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research process, and each participant's freedom to participate, or withdraw their consent, at any time.

Research Participants

For the purposes of this study, four student participants were selected, using a stratified, systematic, random sampling method (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The population was identified using special education and long-term suspension discipline

data from the Wilson City School District. The student participants met the following inclusion criteria: over the age of 18, classified ED and have been long-term suspended while enrolled in the WCSD. All individuals were excluded from participation in this study if they were under the age of 18, classified anything other than ED and/or have never been long-term suspended while attending school in the WCSD. While attempting to identify potential student participants, for students currently enrolled in the WCSD, the researcher contacted the building administrator to notify them of their request to make initial contact with the student. Also, for students no longer enrolled in the WCSD, attempts were made to reach the potential participant by phone and/or home visit.

To obtain parental/guardian perspectives on students' experiences with long-term suspension, five parent/guardians participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The study's participant population was established by, first, asking for student participant's permission for the researcher to contact their parent/guardians for the purposes of obtaining their commitment to study participation prior to conducting the student interview. Subsequently, the student interview was only conducted if the parent/guardians agreed to participate. The parent/guardian participants met the following inclusion criteria: parent/guardians of a student participating in this study.

Finally, to obtain the perspectives of school administrators, four current school administrators in the WCSD were identified for participation in this study. The participants met the following inclusion criteria: current administrator of the WCSD, and firsthand experience with students classified ED, not necessarily those students participating in the study, who have served a long-term suspension. Individuals were excluded from this study if they were not a current administrator in the WCSD, if they

had less than 3 years of building-level administrative experience, and, also, if they did not have firsthand experience with the long-term suspension process.

Instruments

This phenomenological, qualitative study focused on gaining perspectives on the "lived experiences" of students classified ED who were long-term suspended, their parent/guardians, and school administrator (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2016). The researcher served as the primary instrument in this study (Creswell, 2014; Starks and Trinidad, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were employed and field notes were taken to understand the themes and perceptions of participant experiences that occurred as a result of a long-term suspension (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To provide a framework for the interview, questions centered on Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 2006; Haggbloom et al., 2002). Prior to the actual interviews, the researcher completed a pilot test to ensure the effectiveness of the study's planned procedures and to adjust accordingly (Monette, Sullivan, Dejong, & Hilton, 2014).

Data Collection

Within the first week of Wilson City School District IRB approval, the researcher obtained the most recent contact information for potential participants. The researcher accessed WCSD databases to ascertain the status of student enrollment and, recent phone numbers and addresses. Three phone call attempts were made to reach the potential participants who met the inclusion criteria, in order to inform them of the study and to seek their voluntary participation. If the potential participant was unable to be reached via phone, the researcher attempted a home visit. If the attempted phone calls and home visit were unsuccessful, the researcher moved on to the next potential participant. The letter of

introduction was either mailed or hand delivered, by the researcher, within 24 hours, of speaking directly with the potential participant.

Semi-structured interviews were employed in order to parse out the themes and perceptions of student experiences that came about as a result of being long-term suspended (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the interviewer to pursue relevant ideas or responses in more detail (Gill, Stewart, Chadwick, 2008). The interview protocol included a brief verbal introduction describing the study's purpose, what would occur during the interview, and how the interview would be concluded (Appendix B, C, D). Prior to beginning the interviews, the participants received the informed consent memo, had the opportunity to ask any questions and, then, sign the consent. Once participants signed their consent, the researcher asked guided interview questions to keep the interview focused.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

This study's data collection proceeded over a period of 6 weeks, as follows:

1. Obtained IRB approval SJFC (Appendix E).
2. Obtained IRB approval WCSD (Appendix F).
3. Made multiple attempts to connect with all potential participants who met the inclusion criteria, informed them of the study, sought the following forms of voluntary participation: phone calls, letters, and home visits.
4. Mailed letter and consent for participation in the study (Appendix G)
5. Scheduled interviews to occur within 2 weeks of obtaining participants signed agreement.

6. Called participants 2 days prior to remind and confirm time and location of interview.
7. Conducted/completed interviews within 6 weeks (Appendix H, I, J).
8. Provides participants with a thank you note and $15 gift card in appreciation of their time for the interview.
9. Completed transcription of interviews within 24 hours of completing interviews using a transcription service.
10. Once all data was collected, initiated qualitative analysis using coding.
11. Stored all digital copies of interviews and formal responses in a password protected folder to be deleted after 3 years of the completion of the dissertation.
12. Transcribed interviews and notes. Data analysis was manually bracketed, coded, and clustered data into themes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of several steps. After each interview, the digital recording was reviewed several times to assure consistency of understanding. Additionally, a comparison of notes taken during the interview was performed. Within 24 hours of each interview, the interview recordings and field notes, taken by the researcher during the interviews, were transcribed, verbatim. Once transcriptions were completed, data were manually bracketed, coded, and clustered into themes.

Bracketing. In order to be certain that the research process was firmly rooted in the experiences of the participants and informed the research questions, keywords and phrases were identified that would assist in understanding how the participants

experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 2010). Additionally, notes were written in the margins of the transcriptions to identify keywords and phrases (Creswell, 2014). To ensure the development of relevant codes and themes, the research questions were often referenced.

Coding. Next, the transcribed interviews were read. The interviewer analyzed transcripts and captured the words or phrases expressed by the participants line by line. Predetermined codes, as well as developed emerging codes, were developed after multiple reviews of the data which were connected to the different aspects of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The codes focused on significant statements based on the research questions, theoretical framework, and interview questions (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 2010). A colleague at SJFC coded with the researcher to establish interrater reliability.

Themes. The statements made by the participants were used to identify significantly similar themes identified through cross-coding (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 2010; Saldana, 2016). Focusing on major themes and cross-coding, the researcher sifted significant statements into smaller clusters of themes, noting similarity among the participants (Saldana, 2016). As a result of the salient collected data, the researcher wrote a detailed description of the participants' phenomenon. Finally, once the data saturation was reached and major themes were identified, the researcher compiled a narrative summary reflecting the researcher's interpretation of the analyzed data (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2016).

Confidentiality. Confidentiality was maintained during the interviews. As such, identifiers were not used during the interview and analysis process. Prior to submitting the recordings for transcription, pseudonyms were assigned in place of the participants'

names to ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained. Furthermore, there was no distinguishing information linking the participants to the pseudonym or study. In terms of precautions taken to protect all study-related materials, all digital audio recordings, and transcriptions of interviews, were maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely. Electronic files were encrypted with identity codes and pseudonyms; they did not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study.

Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, were stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet. With only the researcher able to access the electronic or paper records, the digitally recorded audio data will be kept for a period of 5 years following completion of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for 5 years after publication, with all paper records being cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Furthermore, electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices, such that restoring data is not possible.

Credibility

The researcher has been a special education teacher and administrator for over 20 years. In 1993, the researcher earned a Bachelor's degree in elementary and special education, earning a Master's degree in special education from the same institution the following year. Additionally, in 2014, she earned a school administrator certificate, at the building and district level. The researcher is not affiliated with the student and parent participants in any professional or personal capacity. However, the researcher self-disclosed a potential professional affiliation with the school administrators that

participated in this study. Eliminating any potential for perceived impropriety, the self-disclosed professional affiliation does not include any type of supervisory relationship.

Summary

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of those associated with long-term suspension, while providing information on the unique experiences of students, parent/guardians, and school administrators (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher selected a phenomenological approach in order to best explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and voices of participants in order to identify the phenomenon (Moustakas, 2010). At the conclusion of the interviews, data were aggregated through the coding of responses and collation of themes. Furthermore, the researcher employed a textural and structural description in order to convey what, and how, the participants experienced the long-term suspension process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 2010). Chapter 4 will focus on the data analysis and findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the long-term suspension process and experience for students classified with an emotional disturbance. The results address the study's two research questions, which are as follows:

1. What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?
2. What, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension?

In posing these questions, the researcher sought to understand the perceptions of individuals who were personally involved with the long-term suspension process, providing information on the unique experiences of students, parent/guardians, and administrators. Additionally, this chapter presents the findings and themes of the study that emerged from the lived experiences, perceptions, and voices of participants to identify and describe the phenomenon (Moustakas, 2010). Further, the chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Participants

There were 13 participants in this study consisting of four students previously enrolled in the WCSD, five parent/guardians, and four administrators. Interviews took place in homes, schools, and public facilities. All 42 potential participants who met the

inclusion criteria were African American males, although the study was not designed to be specific to this population. From the 42 potential student participants, a master list was constructed and every fourth qualified candidate was contacted. Of the 22 initial student attempts, 18 students did not have working phone numbers, or current addresses, and four students were incarcerated. However, for the four students who participated in this study, the following demographics were obtained: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, and (d) reason for long-term suspension. The following data were also collected via interview, from five parent/guardian participants: (a) ethnicity, (b) gender, and (c) relationship to the student. Student data can be viewed in Table 4.1, and parent/guardians data can be viewed in Table 4.2. For the four administrators interviewed, the following data were collected: (a) current role in WCSD, and (b) years of administrative experience. Finally, administrative data can be viewed in Table 4.3.

The student participants in this study were over the age of 18, classified as ED and were long-term suspended while enrolled in the WCSD (Table 4.1). None of the student participants in this study graduated from high school, as of yet. The reasons why student participants were long-term suspended ranged from possession of a box cutter, fighting off school grounds, stealing an electronic device, and trespassing on school grounds while serving a short-term suspension.

Table 4.1

Student Summary

Student Participant Pseudonym Age Gender Ethnicity	Background
David 21 Male African American	Was enrolled in an out of district special education program (tuition paid for by the WCSD) and was long-term suspended for possession of a box cutter. As a result David was expelled from the alternative program and returned to a comprehensive WCSD high school. Shortly after, David was long-term suspended for a second time, for being involved in a fight, after school, off of school property. David did not graduate from high school.
John 18 Male African American	Was long-term suspended three times (for fighting) while enrolled in two comprehensive high schools in the WCSD. The third long-term suspension led to his family filing a PINS petition and John was sent to a juvenile correctional facility. John never returned to the WCSD. John did not graduate from high school.
Larry 20 Male African American	Was long-term suspended for the theft of an electronic device at school. Incident evolved into a criminal case. Larry went to court and was sent to juvenile correctional facility. Larry did not graduate from high school.
Mark 20 Male African American	While Mark was serving a short-term suspension (for using a cell phone in school), he picked up a friend at dismissal at the school from which Mark was suspended. The school faculty deemed that Mark was trespassing which resulted in him being long-term suspended. Mark did not graduate from high school.

The parent/guardian participants were comprised of two grandmothers, two mothers, and one aunt (Table 4.2). Larry was the only student who was still residing with a parent/guardians.

Table 4.2

Parent/Guardians Summary

Parent/ Guardian Pseudonym	Relationship to Student
Tory	David's grandmother
Judy	John's mother
Lillian	Larry's grandmother
Hazel	Larry's aunt
Dorothy	Mark's mother

Four current school administrators in the WCSD were identified as potential participants for this study (Table 4.3). Each administrator exceeded the minimum 3 years of administrative experience in the WCSD, as required in the inclusion criteria. Specifically, the administrator participants consisted of two assistant principals, and two principals. Each school administrator had firsthand experience with students classified as ED, though not necessarily those students participating in this study, who have served a long-term suspension.

Table 4.3

Administrator Summary

Pseudonym	Current Role	Experience
Assistant Principal Felic	Assistant Principal	Has served as an administrator for over 10 years in the WCSD.
Principal Jadah	Principal	Has served as an administrator for over 10 years in the WCSD.
Assistant Principal Suzman	Assistant Principal	Has served as an administrator for over 10 years in the WCSD.
Principal Valenti	Principal	Has served as an administrator for over 10 years in the WCSD.

Data Analysis and Findings

The study included 12 interviews, which were conducted over a 6 week period in the spring of 2018. Pseudonyms were used for the participant names in order to protect their anonymity. In addition the name Student Alternative Suspension Setting (SASS) has been adopted as the pseudonym for the alternative school site that students are assigned to attend while serving long-term suspension from the WCSD. Each participant was asked nine interview questions (Appendix H-J). Depending on the participant's responses to the questions, interviews lasted an average of 35 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed verbatim. Field notes were handwritten, typed, and reviewed. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions multiple times and updated twice to ensure the validity of the participants' answers. Predetermined codes, as well as

developed emerging codes, were created after multiple reviews of the data which were connected to the different aspects of Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

Results and analysis research for question 1. The first part of the interview was designed to address the first research question: *What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?* Based on the researcher's codes, three themes from the first research question emerged from the interviews: (a) asymmetrical educational experiences, (b) communication failure, and (c) self-destructive relationships. The participant response patterns, as related to research question 1, can be viewed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Research Question 1 Tally of Codes

Theme	Code	Student	Parent/Guardian	Administrator	Total
1. Asymmetrical Educational Experiences	Culture/Environment	32	24	24	80
	Classroom Instruction	31	15	29	75
	Act During Hearing	18	1	17	36
	Course Completion	4	1	15	20
2. Communication Failure	Actions	18	27	41	86
	Communication	0	24	33	57
	Punishment	12	3	8	23
3. Self-destructive Relationships	Advice	19	31	17	67
	Hearing Process	6	24	28	58
	Relationships	29	10	9	48

Table 4.4 lists the tally of codes for the themes that were identified for the first research question. In the column to the far left, are the three themes that were identified. In addition, codes are provided and tallied for each subgroup of participants, as well as, a combined total of tallies.

Theme 1- asymmetrical educational experiences. Based on the explanation from student participant, Mark, and his mother, Dorothy, Mark's lack of education began immediately after he was informed that his punishment would include suspension. During his interview, Mark shared that he did not receive any type of instruction from the day the suspension occurred, to nearly 5 weeks later. Mark explained how he sat at home, and waited for 2 weeks for the long-term suspension hearing to be conducted and then waited an additional 2 weeks for special transportation and enrollment into SASS. Still frustrated from the experience, he said, "It took them about 2 weeks to get me the meeting, and then after the meeting, it was pretty much determined that I would be suspended for the remainder of the year." Emphasizing a significant amount of perceived wasted time, Mark continued his story:

> Then they told me that I would be getting a letter in the mail about SASS. The letter took forever to come, and then after I got the letter, I didn't start attending SASS for another week. Getting a tutor or [being] enrolled in this program was not an immediate thing, which I thought was weird because when you're in school, they make it seem like every day of education is so important. Like missing a day of school is detrimental to you. And especially with me having an IEP plan, I thought that it was weird that me being a kid with special needs, you have me out of school for so long.

Well aware of the risks that her son faces, Mark's mother, Dorothy, shared the following, "Statistics say missing one day of school can put you behind 3 weeks. Well, what is 1 week, or 2 weeks, or a month of being at home without any learning going to do to that child?"

Supporting the aforementioned inefficiencies of this practice, the students, family, and administrators also expressed concern that the students who attended SASS were provided three hours of instruction a day, as opposed to 7 hours of instruction given within a traditional school day. Another student participant, David reported that, "At SASS, I felt like I wasn't getting an education." Agreeing with the sentiment, David's grandmother, Tory, added, "The educational setup at SASS is not equalized and I pray all the time that things change in certain communities for certain children." Tori continued her story by saying, "There's not enough said about the limits of resources in the schools. Especially these alternative schools." Grandma Lillian mentioned, "These alternative schools are not set up to help the teachers or the pupils that go there."

From an administrative perspective, when Principal Valenti shared his experiences with SASS, he shrugged his shoulders, turned his hand up, and confessed, "You just can't get, in 2 to 3 hours, what you get instructionally in a full day of school." Furthermore, students were only enrolled in English, social studies, science, and math. They were not provided with the opportunities to enroll in electives while attending this school. Principal Jadah, also an administrator, recalled, "I think the challenge or the rigor is not nearly the same. It can't be. You have less class choices." Assistant Principal Felic suggested that, "Some of the electives students are enrolled in, might not be available at SASS."

Participants, from each category of this study, expressed uniformly, that a minimal amount of instruction and learning was occurring during modified days at SASS. In addition, Mark discussed how his academic instruction did not extend beyond being given a worksheet from the teacher. Underscoring the barebones environment and

instruction, Mark shared, “In every class, you get a folder with worksheets. They be like, ‘Here ya go. This is what you’re gonna do today.’ Or sometimes it was the work for the week and they expected us to complete the task independently without any instruction.” Allowing the frustration to get the best of him, momentarily, Mark exclaimed, “SASS was bullshit! The work at SASS is way different. Teachers at SASS don’t know what they’re doing. My work, it was so easy, I could do the work on the bus ride home.”

Nearly all of the comments made by the administrators reported that students did not have positive academic experiences. Saddened, Principal Jadah admitted, “I feel the learning has been halted for most kids who are long-term suspended.” Similarly, Principal Valenti advised, “There’s a sense of, the student has done something really bad and they really don’t have a right. Their rights aren’t ensured there, instructionally.” Assuming a conservative approach to their shared comments, Assistant Principal Suzman admitted to having, “. . . nothing good to say about SASS.” Loosening up, this participant further complained that, “SASS is just a nightmare,” going on to say:

> I would like to know the last time the teachers actually planned and taught a lesson. I don’t know the last time those teachers ever thought about rigor, because the rigor we have here and the rigor they have over there, it just blows my mind. They just give the kids worksheets.

Interestingly, Assistant Principal Suzman also explained that many students, who undergo long-term suspension, hardly ever attended SASS but, nevertheless, received an “A” in their courses. In response to this subsequent probing question, “What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?”, she pushed away from the

conference table, threw one hand in the air, and said with a great deal of sarcasm, “Blow up! Redesign itself. I mean, that program is a mess”!

The students, parent/guardians, and school administrative participants commented that the teachers assigned to teach at the SASS were not highly regarded. During this portion of the interview, David shifted his lunch to the end of the table and said, “They’re putting half ass teachers at SASS, who should not be teachers.” He went on to share the following, “I feel like the teachers at SASS got fired from their real teaching job because they couldn’t teach and they put you down here with these kids. The teachers they have at SASS shouldn’t be teachers.” When Dorothy, Mark’s mother, reflected on her experiences with SASS, she smacked her lips and stated, “SASS is just a bust!” Principal Valenti shared, “The people that I know of that work at SASS, are not the teachers anybody else would want in their school.” Finally, the culture at SASS was characterized as non-conducive to meeting the needs of the students enrolled in the program. Expounding on this idea, Mark shared:

> SASS gets looked over. 'Cause it's just like, okay, those are the badass kids. You know what I mean? Like they're over there. Don’t get me wrong, the students there were very disrespectful. Extremely disrespectful. There was no chain of authority at SASS, not even for the principal. None of the school safety officers have no authority. I seen more fights at SASS in the little time I was there than I saw in my 6 years in my home school. The school was just set up on just one floor. The one floor has six doors on it. One door is to the main office, one door is the principal’s office, one door is the counselor and then there is three rooms for learning. Oh and a computer room, so seven doors. So it’s different.

Larry's aunt, Hazel, reported, "The alternative program that they have for long-term is not suitable for the situation. Because you are literally putting a whole bunch of angry pit bulls into a cage." Furthermore, Judy, John's mother, stated, "SASS was more like a recruitment center for gangs." Assistant Principal Suzman recalled:

> A kid who came back for selling a large amount of drugs went to SASS and said to the students that when he returned to our school, 'I want to go back. They were my best clients.' So the security over there does not appear to be very tight. Kids are like. They smoke marijuana in the bathrooms. It kind of, I hear nothing good."

This comment appears to support that these students have greater opportunities to become associated with individuals involved in illegal activities than receiving a quality education when attending SASS.

Theme 2- communication failure. All three categories of participants in this study expressed sense of non-communication throughout the long-term suspension process. Importantly, this lack of communication often degrades the relationships between students, parent/guardians, teachers, and administrators. None of the students, or families, could recall any home visits, restorative conversations, or even a single phone call from the alternative school, or home school, while their child was serving long-term suspension. Sad and angry, Tory emoted, "These children are forgotten. . . . Every child is worth a second chance." Lamenting the missed opportunities, Lillian shared:

> No one ever reached out. That's why I got. I was just so fed up with the Wilson City School District. That's when I seen for real that's what they're all

> about. By Larry going to placement, that's the best thing that could have happened to him, and that's sad.

Similarly, the four administrators reported major disconnects between their schools and SASS, acknowledging that they had very little, if any, communication with the alternative school before, during, or after the student served their long-term suspension. Assistant Principal Suzman reported, "There's no communication between the alternative school, the teachers, and the student's home school whatsoever. I've never spoken to anybody over there." Similarly, Assistant Principal Felic admitted:

> There's not enough communication between the student's home school and SASS. I'm guilty of that myself. I think we need to bridge the lines of communication because we know the students are coming back, but then we get caught up with everything else that's going on. If they've been gone for such a long period of time, they feel like they no longer belong, so we need to work on getting them to be a part of their family unit here again.

Assistant Principal Suzman recounted, "There's disconnect with the education. There's a disconnect with the teacher communication. They don't call us. They don't talk to our teachers. They don't even email our teachers." Principal Valenti mentioned that the enrollment at SASS changed on a regular basis, which contributed to the challenges teachers faced when attempting to create a curriculum that meets the needs of each student. In reference to the communication between the alternative program and student's home school, Assistant Principal Felic proposed:

> I would like to see more of a connection between the school and SASS for the purpose of instruction and the purpose of social and emotional support and have it

> go bilateral. Because I feel like we are operating as separate entities that are all trying to support the student, but our communication is not always there.

In conjunction with Assistant Principal Felic, Assistant Principal Jada offered the following recommendations:

> I think there should be some type of questionnaire that is required to be filled out by the home school that is sending the student. I think there should be a section where previous teachers and the counselor are required to come together and fill out what strengths this student has exhibited so people can tap into those immediately. What do we perceive is their best learning style? What are their triggers? I feel like SASS gets very limited information, other than whatever act was committed that landed the student there, but very little other than that.

Principal Jada suggested that the student's home school should share critical information about the student to support with the transition of schools.

Theme 3- self-destructive relationships. Of the students and parent/guardians interviewed for this study, most advocated on behalf of their student and felt the WCSD did not care about the student. Mark shared, "I just felt like my voice was not heard in the long-term hearing at all." His explanation further articulated his conscious perception of mistreatment when he stated, "I felt like most of the time it's innocent until proven guilty, but when I walked into the hearing, I felt as if I was guilty until proven innocent." When David was asked to reflect on what caused him to get long-term suspended, he advised that, "It was they were all ganging up on me at school. It was either a prejudice thing, or it was just y'all don't care about these kids. Y'all just gonna do what y'all want to do." David also mentioned that, "Being long-term suspended made me feel some type

of way about the WCSD. It was some bullshit." David shared more about his experiences with one particular teacher:

> I didn't understand the staff at SASS. I didn't understand the things that they were doing. Oh yeah. I forgot there was this one lady over there, I forgot her name. She worked at SASS. I think she was an administrator at SASS. And she used to tell the kids other kids' business. I didn't get down with that program at all.

David also reported that, for some teachers and administrators in the WCSD, their profession is just a job ". . . and they say, 'Fuck these kids.'" When David was asked a probing question, "What advice would you give another student who was long-term suspended?" he adamantly replied, "Speak up, starting when you get suspended or start when you're having problems and speak up if you got a hearing. Just speak up! Let yourself be understood and heard. Advocate for yourself." Furthermore, David also expresses his feeling of being detached. He recalled, "It was like being ripped away from my, what I knew, my school family."

Dorothy described the numerous negative phone calls she would receive about her child before he was long-term suspended and how exhausting it was for her not to get lost in the fight for her son. She began by asserting the following, "You get lost in what you're fighting for when you're always fighting for something." Dorothy then paused, attempted to straighten out her work uniform, and looked squarely at the researcher with tears welling up in her eyes, and whispered, "You just get lost in it." Lillian also expressed similar feelings of exasperation as she continued sharing her story:

> I was so tired cause of all they had done. We went through so much, I was just so worn out. I'm tellin' you they would call me every day, and ask me can he. I guess they wanted Larry to go someplace else, they didn't want him there.

As Lillian began to reminisce about her grandson's experience, she laughed sarcastically, recalling, "I went into the school, and I seen that the teacher saw me and she ran the other way." Judy shared how her son proclaimed his innocence, saying, "It was not my fault. It wasn't my fault. They don't like me. They just don't like me." Even Tory reflected on the number of suspensions her grandson David received, sharing, "There were so many. There was so much going on with David over the years. It eventually became something that we had to take day to day."

Judy also shared her experiences with her son's long-term suspension:

> . . . and they would call me like every week. He'd be out of school for this week for 3 days. And the next week he's out for 3 more days. Then, I mean, I get they're doing their little paperwork, and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Keep writing it up. Keep writing it up, and then boom, he's outta there. He's long-termed. But I think they could have been more caring.

The parent/guardians commonly expressed encountering a lack of empathy from the school, and SASS, throughout the long-term suspension experience. For Lillian, she recalls feeling that the guilty verdict of her grandson's case seemed automatic, a foregone conclusion. Along these lines, she stated, "There was no discussion, it was just automatic, you are suspended from school. It was automatic. Done. We didn't have to answer no questions, it was automatic." Reflecting on the long-term suspension hearing, and with a firm voice, Dorothy suggested:

> Take a lawyer with you to your hearing, take your mother, take your father, take your grandparents, take as much support as you can. Have someone with you with a sound mind and body who can navigate through the meeting and make sure you are heard. Make sure the room is even!

As Dorothy was continuing to share her son's experience she said, "You know, these kids. These kids you deal with today are the people that will be running the world tomorrow. The way you treat them is the way they will treat people tomorrow. Do you think they've ever thought about it like that? I doubt it."

All four administrative participants acknowledged the regrettable nature of the experiences of long-term suspension, citing the negative impact it has on the relationship between the student and their parent/guardians and schools. Too, they expressed frustration with parts of the WCSD long-term suspension protocols and processes. Principal Jadah stated that, "It feels like it's us against the student when the whole purpose of education is opposite of that." Reflecting on a common sense of hopelessness, Assistant Principal Felic mentioned, "Sometimes I feel that the student and the family feel that we are giving up on them, but that's not the case." Assistant Principal Suzman pointed out, "Parents see the school as their enemy as a result of the long-term suspension." Assistant Principal Felic even went as far as to say that, when some students return from long-term suspension, they are welcomed back; however, he added that he is ". . . not sure if [it is] truly from the heart; [I] think there is a lot of hollowness." Principal Valenti reported:

> I think sometimes long-term suspension is overused. I've read some descriptions or summaries as to why students were long-termed. Some kids can get long-term

> suspended in the city schools for staring at people and making them feel uncomfortable. They may get the same consequence as someone that brought a knife or gun to school or assaulted a staff member. So the sentences aren't always just. And sometimes they're heavy-handed and sometimes they are light.

In addition, as Principal Valenti, reflecting on the previous WCSD long-term suspension hearing process as compared to the current, mentioned:

> In the past, there were several hearing officers and you could not . . . you would not know who you were going to see in advance. So you couldn't pick up the phone like you could now and call the hearing officer and say, 'Hey I might need your help with this one.'

However, Principal Valenti suggested that, for some students long-term suspension is a "wake up call." He also expressed that:

> Long-term suspension isn't anything other than a punishment. It is not a restorative process, it's not to help them. It's to punish them. And I think at times we confuse or we use the process to get students help. That's not what it's meant for. It's to punish for a behavior.

Each administrator participant recognized that most students were misunderstood and conveyed that they often felt targeted and treated unfairly throughout the long-term suspension process. They seem to wish that the long-term suspension process did not have such a negative impact on their relationships between administrators and students and their families.

Results and analysis for research question 2. The interview was also designed to address the second research question: *What, if any, were the perceived effects of the*

long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension? Four themes emerged from the second research question: (a) perceptions of being misunderstood and worthless; (b) set up for failure; (c) public school pipeline to incarceration; and (d) preventable wildfire. The frequency of responses from research question 2 can be viewed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Research Question 2 Tally of Codes

Theme	Codes	Student	Parent/Guardian	Administrator	Total
1. Perceptions of Being Misunderstood and Worthless	Feelings	43	59	29	131
2. Set Up for Failure	Feelings	43	59	29	131
	Recommendations	31	44	49	124
	Impact	10	12	0	22
3. Public School Pipeline to Incarceration	Feelings	43	59	29	131
	What Learned	7	6	8	21
	Duration	0	13	3	16
4. Preventable Wildfire	Feelings	43	59	29	131
	Recommendations	31	44	49	124
	Do Differently	15	16	0	31

Table 4.5 lists the tally of codes for the themes that were identified for the second research question. In the column to the far left, are the four themes that were identified. In addition, codes are provided and tallied for each subgroup of participants, as well as, a combined total of tallies.

Theme 1- perceptions of being misunderstood and worthless. Starting with the long-term suspension hearing, Mark felt that his voice was not heard and that the WCSD, ". . . didn't understand him." He continued his story by expressing the following:

They didn't know why I do certain things, or why I act certain ways. They didn't

> know. They didn't know me and to be completely honest, they didn't want to know or they didn't want to put the time in or even find out, 'Oh yeah he's a good kid after all.'

Although Mark started his interview sitting on the couch, it is worthy to note that, by this point in the interview, he was pacing back and forth in his living room. Mark raised his voice and stated that, as a result of being long-term suspended, "The Wilson City School District really doesn't care about you as a person." When comparing his home school and the alternative program he attended while suspended, Mark alluded to the differences in special education support. Mark also recalled being pulled out of class in order to receive psychological counseling services every week when he was attending his home school. However, claiming that he didn't receive those services at SASS, he advised:

> Me being pulled out of class at my school, I felt loved. Me being loved made me feel like I could succeed. They made me feel like I could succeed. They made me feel like I could do what I needed to do. When I got long-termed, it felt like all of that was taken away.

When Mark replied to the question about what he learned as a result of being long-term suspended, pacing back and forth in his living room, he confessed, "I feel as though I learned nothing from being long-termed." He also said, "Me being gone 6 months really affected the relationships that I had with teachers. It affected the bond that I had with my friends. I was a social outcast." For example, Mark disclosed:

> So to go back to regular school, to be put back in tenth grade when I should have been graduating that year. I had all 10th grade classes. I'm literally sitting in a

> classroom with 15 and 16-year-olds, some even 14. I felt like I was out of place. I felt like I didn't belong.

David went as far as to explain:

> I feel that the consequence was far too harsh for what really happened. I mean, having a fight? Not even on school property? Ok. Maybe having a couple of days of suspension would have been more appropriate but to have long-termed you for 6 months and getting you out of your regular school really messed me up all the way around.

John, too, felt misunderstood as he shared his feelings, "In some cases, some people actually were defending themselves, but both parties would get long-term suspended. It's just funny. Like, there's so many times, like somebody would be defending themselves, and they get long-termed with that person. That ain't right." Even after John served his long-term suspension he continued to feel misunderstood by the faculty at his home-school. John said, "They didn't treat me like anything. It was more like they feared my being there because of how many fights I had got into."

The parents and guardians who participated in this study reported that being long-term suspended negatively affected their child's self-perception. When Tory, David's grandmother, was asked what she remembered about her grandson being long-term suspended, her postured slouched, and her voice became more assertive as she confessed:

> I can remember his anger. It would make him angry. A lot of times he would show it in the fact that his self-esteem was affected and you could tell it. You know, feeling low. I could tell that was how he was feeling about himself.

Tory also shared that, at SASS, "They really do not promote increasing a person's self-worth. There is little or no regard for their feelings." Larry's Aunt Hazel shook her head back and forth as she indicated, "He never with the long-term issue, he was just never actually supported. Never actually given help. Never. Larry was very over-looked. Very overlooked." Thoroughly unimpressed with the entire process, Tory also stated:

> It almost seemed like they put a stamp on him. You're a thug. You're uneducable. We contain you for whatever hours and then you're out of here. And it's like to me, especially in the last part of what he would experience, they like couldn't wait for him to get to a certain age. I was very aware of that. So they could just totally discard him.

When Mark's mother, Dorothy, was asked about the impact of long-term suspension, she replied:

> You get through it the best way you can, but you never really go back and acknowledge your feelings about it. You know what I'm saying? You just push through because you got to be strong for your baby. You got to be strong for them.

When Dorothy was reflecting on how the long-term suspension process affected her son, she said, "He was angry. He was hurt. He felt like he didn't have a voice. That no one cared about his side of the story. He felt like he was being badgered."

When Dorothy was, then, asked to share how the long-term suspension hearing made her feel, she paused, took a few sips of her coffee, and, with aggression in her voice, she replied:

> I was really pissed at the hearing. I'm not going to lie to you. Teachers that I thought we had a good rapport with that could call me. I felt like they coaxed me into making me feel safe. But at the end of the meeting, they were pushing the agenda. I felt discarded. I felt disregarded. I felt like my opinion didn't matter. The future I wanted for my son didn't matter. They made us feel like they just did not want to be bothered with us.

Dorothy went as far as stating that she felt the school administrators were incorrect with their findings at the long-term suspension hearing, and that the district was insensitive to their needs. She even began to question her own parenting skills, "It even broke me to a certain extent because I was like, 'Fuck it! We'll just drop out. Just drop out. You'll get your GED this way you can go to college." Mark's mother seemed to think that her son had a greater chance of earning a GED than a high school diploma from the WCSD at the start of his long-term suspension journey.

Theme 2- set up for failure. All of the students and the parent/guardians that participated in this study claimed that being long-term suspended from school had a significant role in why they never graduated from high school. When David was asked to reflect on his education, while being long-term suspended, he openly shared:

> So by not being there, I'm not in class, I'm not learning nothing. Even when the student returns to his home school after serving a long-term suspension, the curriculum was not aligned. I get long-term suspended and then when I come back even the teachers look at me like I don't know what I'm doing cuz I've been gone for so long.

Mark, who had already repeated a grade in elementary school, spoke in his interview about how he had to repeat a grade as a result of being long-term suspended. This situation consequently required Mark to take classes the following year with students 2 years younger than him. When Mark was asked how the long-term suspension made him feel, he replied, "It made me feel like, what am I going to school for? I got me a part-time job and I was like, fuck it! What happens, happens." On a number of occasions during Mark's interview, he referenced that he basically lost over a month of education before he started attending SASS. Furthermore, he suggested:

> I feel like if they're gonna long-term you, prior to that meeting, prior to your meeting where they talk about if you're definitely long-termed or not, they should let you attend in school suspension. Until you are definitely set at SASS, they should be getting some type of education. Whether it's someone dropping off the stuff at home or a parent going to get it. It should still be offered, 'cause that was never offered to me.

John looked down in his lap, recalling the perceived effects of being long-term suspended, shared the following:

> Being long-term suspended, I was younger. So it was like, I really didn't care. But being long-term suspended really set me up for failure. When you're home, you're not going to want to stay home. So what are you going to do during that time? Go out. Do whatever you want. That's basically what I was doing. I did really whatever I wanted without thinking.

John divulged, "When they thought they was going to long-term me, a normal kid my age is like, 'You really think I'm about to go to that alternative school for 6 months

when I could be in my regular school?' No way!" John continued his story about reflecting on what it would be like if he were to return to his home school after he was suspended. John stated:

> It would be like, pointless for me to go because then it's like when I look at myself going back into that school, going back into a school. It's like, my cousin graduated this year and he younger than me. How do that look on me?

John paused, nervously looked around and continued his story, saying, "I'd look like a fool going back to school. That's how a lot of kids see it. That's why kids drop out and being long-term suspended triggered my friends into like the judicial system." During John's interview, he also said, "What is the point of me learning if I'm only going to get one, not all of the credits that I need. Two, I'm missing all of the knowledge I need for the Regents [state final] exam." John shared:

> And now, I'm trying to get a job. I've been in and out a job for about 6 months now. It's hard. Once you hit the age of 18 and you looking for jobs and whatnot, and you don't got your diploma or equivalent, it's hard. Right now I feel very lost and don't really know what you're going to do at the time.

When reflecting on being long-term suspended, John took a deep breath, paused and disclosed:

> It messed everything up. What are they supposed to do from here on out? That one little thing. This is why, today, I feel like I still haven't finished school. 'Cause if I had not been long-term suspended, I feel like I would have graduated. Now it's like, me not having a sense of direction.

However, Larry reported that he purposefully and repeatedly violated the district's code of conduct, in order to get himself suspended. Hesitating before mentioning this part of his story, he eventually went on to say that, "Being long-term suspended was a positive for me to keep doing it, but it was a negative for me to stop being long-term suspended. I just let the streets bring me down and I did not graduate."

In fact, the parent/guardians seemed very disturbed with, not only their immediate experiences with impact of long-term suspension, but how it set the student up for future challenges. Judy, John's mother, suggested that, "Because he was long-termed he is still struggling today. He doesn't have a diploma and is having such a hard time getting a job." When Lillian was asked how being long-term suspended impacted Larry, she replied that, "It caused him to get disinterested. He doesn't have no interest no more. Don't even care." When Tory was asked about the perceived impacts of long-term suspension on her grandson's learning, she shared, "It impacted him even worse because after the alternative school, he really had no interest in continuing his education and you could tell that."

Principal Valenti suggested that when students are serving a long-term suspension, "There is a significant disruption of their instruction." With a bit of cynicism, Assistant Principal Suzman spoke honestly, saying that students:

> . . . definitely do better academically while attending SASS because their grades are inflated over there. However, they always fall apart when they come back. For the school, it really kind of sucks because they come back here and they tell everyone how great it is over there and how they didn't have to do anything. So it kind of makes long-term seem like a joke.

As far as equity, Assistant Principal Suzman firmly stated that, "We just don't have enough resources or manpower to manage the special education population with equity." She also shared her doubts about the alternative program students are assigned to attend when serving their long-term suspension, "I don't know anyone that thinks it's a good thing to put all of naughty kids in one location. I mean, that's proven not to work." Furthermore, Assistant Principal Suzman admitted that, "Nobody ever wants the student that was long-term suspended back in their school." Assistant Principal Felic's tone of voice softened as she conveyed that, "There are some kids who haven't bought into the educational system at all and it's just repeated long-terms over time. If you look historically at their record, it wasn't their first long-term and it won't be their last." In other words, from Assistant Principal Felic's experiences as an administrator in the WCSD, being long-term suspended did not reduce recidivism. Principal Jadah went further saying, "I typically think many of the kids that have been long-termed don't exhibit, as I indicated earlier much hope." She also shared, "When they return, in the eyes of the people at the building, the behavior that they left with is the last known impression that people have and it's the first impression they recollect when they come back." In other words, Principal Jada is suggesting that reestablishing relationship with the school community can be very challenging for the student who was long-term suspended because they are often shunned.

Theme 3- public school pipeline to incarceration. Throughout the interviews, subgroups connected their experience with the long-term suspension process to the criminal system. For example, some students mentioned that they felt targeted and treated

unfairly from the time the long-term suspension process began. Along these lines, David stated:

> The hearing, I didn't like it. I felt like a prisoner. It reminded me of something like my brother sitting in front of a judge getting judged by everyone. You see what I'm saying. That's how I looked at it. That's how it looked to me. It felt like the only one who had my back was my grandmother, you see what I'm saying?

Before David described his experience at SASS he wiped the sweat from his forehead and divulged, "It's like you throw them into the basement like they are some type of dogs." David also suggested that, "Some of the kids in my classroom were not like me, they were like, how should I say? They were baby criminals. So sometimes, I think why waste my time with these people in my life." Reflecting on his long-term suspension experience, David volunteered the following:

> SASS never gives you a chance. They never gave. They never gave you that chance. I'm telling you it was like rehab. I look at SASS like rehab. They get you there for 45 days to clean you up and then they send you off. You get dirty again. They take you for another 45 days and then eventually they haul you off.

Similarly, the parent/guardians and administrators perceived the experience of being long-term suspended as similar to the American judicial system. During the interview, Tory questioned the purpose of having police officers in school. On this subject, she stated:

> They're not conditioned any of them, to intervene and look at your child the way they might look at their own child. They bring a mentality that their job is to

> restrain and even possibly arrest that child. How healthy can that be? Really, how healthy can that be?

When Mark's mother, Dorothy, was asked, "What, if anything, did your child learn as a result of being long-term suspended?" she affirmatively replied, "That he's one step closer to prison." Dorothy also raised some significant concerns with long-term suspension, students being kicked out of their school, and the use of police investigations involving student and school matters. She stated, "I think it's all a bit too much. And then why? Really, why is it set up that way?" Dorothy discussed how much she disliked long-term suspension, advising that she believed that it defeated the main reason why students go to school, which is to learn. Dorothy went as far as professing that her son was, ". . . treated like a criminal" and that made him feel like he was really on the verge of going to jail. Dorothy also indicated that, "Being long-term suspended made my son feel like a criminal. Because he was long-termed, he just had day and night to sit there, day and night and think about the most depressing things that his mind would allow him to think about. Like about what his future would be like." Adding to the negative sentiment on suspension, Hazel recounts:

> Because of the way the hearing is set up, they're taking the kids through a little court system, it's a little criminal court system. So you are just basically getting on . . . you're being supportive in helping him get and deal with the criminal system when it's time to go. You're literally giving a pre-junior criminal trial. So you're not actually helping. The way that it's working is not working.

Assistant Principal Felic assuredly mentioned:

> That at the end of the hearing, the hearing officer will say guilty or not guilty. I don't actually know all of the words that they use, and I should because I've been to so many. But I do know they make their decision based on what has been presented.

Principal Valenti also stated, "I don't think the students are as prepared to defend themselves at a long-term suspension hearing the same way the schools are. It's no different than the criminal justice system." In other words, Valenti seemed to imply that not all students and their families are aware of their educational legal rights in the same way they may be unfamiliar with their legal rights with the legal system, therefore, they are not in a position to amply defend themselves.

Theme 4 -preventable wildfire. Participants in this study suggested that the WCSD does not have the appropriate interventions and programs needed to support students with special needs before, during, or after they serve long-term suspension. When Mark was asked about the extra support he was provided at SASS, he explained that he was not receiving the accommodations he should be receiving, according to his IEP. He expounded, sharing:

> Once I was long-termed, the IEP really didn't matter. I mean the extra time I would normally get on tests, I didn't get at SASS. When I was at my regular school, I would normally have a counselor or somebody who would pull me at least once a week to talk, and I didn't get that there either. So it's kind of like they take away all of the support from you.

Furthermore, when the participants in this study were asked, "What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful

experience?" the sheer volume of recommendations was profound. John turned his body towards the researcher, suggesting that, "If you invest in them [the students] that's when they'll want to do more. Until then, they will get in the position like they don't care no more." Unclasping his hands and continuing to make additional suggestions for the improvement of the long-term suspension process, John advised:

> And kids that are always getting kicked out. Always getting kicked out. The ones they always having ISS. Then those would be, I promise you, if you look at them, they invest their time in those kids who are constantly getting into trouble and getting kicked out of the school. There wouldn't be no issue if they focused on them and invested in them.

John continued to nervously look around the library. At this point during the interview, John began fidgeting with his earbuds and wrapping them around one finger as he recommended:

> More home visits. It would be great if y'all had home visits for the troubled kids that y'all see mostly always getting suspended, always in ISS. Those are the ones that usually, nine times out of ten, are the ones who are under distress at home. They might not be, they probably not going to be living at their home with their mother and father. They probably living on couch cushions. That's what they be doing.

David suggested, "Try to work with the kids and at least try to understand them. Try. Open up your eyes. Care. Something." David continued by saying, "I'm not saying get rid of long-term suspensions altogether. I just think they should get rid of all of the unnecessary long-term suspensions and putting a label on these kids heads."

Both Dorothy and Tory had similar suggestions for finding ways to reach and engage the students, while they are long-term suspended. Specifically, Hazel conferred that, "There needs to be a lot more therapeutic, social, and emotional support during the long-term suspension."

Dorothy replied to the interview question, "What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience?" saying:

> They should get the kids tutoring right away. As soon as they are sent home, the very next day they should have someone with them, and also providing social emotional support. I feel that there should be tutors at the downtown library or something where they can go to, where there is learning and instruction taking place right away. I think they should have to see a counselor upon returning back from a long-term suspension to see where their mentality is after being out of school that long. What traumatic issue probably incurred during the long-term suspension?

When speaking with Larry's Grandmother, Lillian and Aunt Hazel both felt that Larry needed far more support than what the WCSD provided, such as psychiatric or therapeutic interventions for the students in the school. Hazel made eye contact with Lillian, paused, and then shared the following:

> Eventually when Larry got older, and he went to higher grades with more kids in the school, and a more of an open campus and more, it just got worse for Larry and I think that's just what happened with his case. It was like just letting a little fire start and nobody ever did anything but put a little water on it. And what are you going to do with a fire, you're going to just ignite and just become a wildfire,

> and that's what literally happened, nobody never really did much to help him emotionally and help him, 'cause what ended coming out later, it's just, it's just sad.

Hazel continued her story about the way students with special needs are treated in the WCSD by asking:

> What is it going to take though? I pray every night. What is it going to take? What is it going to take to make it work for these kids? It's so. It's something that I struggle with every single day. Every day I struggle with it. I go home and I can't sleep because it's such a social justice issue. It's just so sad that nobody is helping these kids. What ends up happening is just it ends up literally just snowballing. It's like, why can't we get it right for these kids?"

Dorothy had a similar experience, conveying that, "Schools have to find a way to reach these kids and provide the interventions and services they need." John's mother, Judy, exclaimed, "I think there should be more involvement with the parent even before we get to the long-term suspension stage. Before you're all just finalizing these kids and just throwing them out there on the street, and boom, done."

Three of the four administrators lamented the lack of support for students with special needs. Principal Jadah felt that, "The WCSD only supports those kids after they've done something that we could have predicted they were going to do." Assistant Principal Suzman stated that, "The WCSD needs more resources to manage the special education population with equity." Furthermore, it was also expressed that because the schools did not provide more interventions for the student and their family, the discipline framework was more punitive than restorative. In support of this idea, Principal Valenti

suggested that, "The district needs to determine whether we are here to punish students or help build them." In other words, the WCSD discipline process is more reactive than proactive when supporting students with special needs.

Summary of Results

Through the semi-structured interviews, 13 participants shared their experiences, and the impacts they felt as a result of the long-term suspension process, within the WCSD. The interviews and subsequent analysis of the transcripts generated themes which describe the perceived experiences and effects of the long-term suspension process for students classified with an emotional disturbance. As a result of the data collected from the participants' experiences with the long-term suspension process, three themes emerged from the first research question: (a) asymmetrical educational experience, (b) communication failure, and (c) self-destructive relationships. In addition, the following four themes surfaced from the second research question, which provided the student, parent/guardians, and administrators with an opportunity to reflect on their perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance, during and after their long-term suspension: (a) perceptions of being misunderstood and worthless, (b) set up for failure, (c) public school pipeline to incarceration, and (d) preventable wildfire.

Of all three groups of participants, the vast majority of their shared experiences, surrounding long-term suspension were identified as negative. In fact, the student and parent/guardians subgroups seemed very disturbed with, not only their immediate experiences, but with the lifelong impacts that being long-term suspension has on students and their families. Compared to the administrators interviewed for this study, the

students and parent/guardian participants shared more negative feelings about their long-term suspension experience. Additionally, students and parent/guardians had far more to share about the negative impacts that long-term suspension exerted on their relationships, in comparison to the comments of the administrator participants. The next chapter of this study will present, and discuss, findings from the study, while making connections to Bandura's self-efficacy (1997) framework.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Seeing the need for vast reform and improvements, this study sought to examine how the long-term suspension process impacted the experiences of students classified with an emotional disturbance, their parent/guardians, and school administrators. Through semi-structured interviews, the study's results offer new, firsthand perspectives on the long-term suspension process and its effects on student identities, school experiences, and future ambitions. Sections of this chapter include (a) implications of findings, (b) limitations, (c) recommendations, and (d) study summary.

Recognizing how to best implement this study, in order to most-fully understand the lived experiences of the participants and to adeptly identify themes from those experiences, the researcher employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2014). With multiple, strong and salient theses emerging from the data, the results of this study are, thusly, informed. The two research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What were the experiences of students with an emotional disturbance during the long-term suspension process?
2. What, if any, were the perceived effects of the long-term suspension process on students with an emotional disturbance during and after serving their long-term suspension?

Implications of Findings

Decades of studies have shown that students with social competence deficits, such as students classified with an emotional disturbance, are at greater risk for demonstrating inappropriate behaviors at school which adversely affects educational performance (Behavioral Health Collaborative, 2010; Newman et al., 1996; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1997; Pryor, 2012). Subsequently, three findings emerged from this study. The first finding of this study is that the current long-term suspension process exacerbates the academic failure of the students, especially those classified with an emotional disturbance. Second, students, once long-term suspended, were found to experience a diminished sense of well-being, with no perceivable end in sight. Finally, there is consensus that the long-term suspension system, as currently operated, is broken and in need of comprehensive repair. Furthermore, it is important to investigate how the results of this study might be explored in order to see where the results align, with Bandura's self-efficacy theoretical framework.

Exacerbates academic failure. The current long-term suspension process exacerbates the academic failure of the students, especially those classified with an emotional disturbance. Similar to the findings of Bandura's research (1993, 2006), the responses of the participants in this study demonstrate that an individual's self-efficacy is heavily based on their lived experiences. All of the participants acknowledged that being long-term suspended evokes a profoundly negative impact on the student. Students who are long-term suspended have questionable educational opportunities in the alternative school in the following ways: they lack quality instruction, they are denied a full day of instruction, they are not afforded the opportunity to earn credit in all of the courses, and

they are given little, to no, instruction or academic rigor. Furthermore, the academic lag these students feel upon returning to their home school, raises significant concern. The lack of equity reveals that the long-term suspension process is not designed to set up students for success while suspended and once they return to their home school. As research has suggested, as students are continuously suspended from their educational setting, they can doubt their own capabilities, adopt a sense of inadequacy, and, eventually, give up on their aspirations altogether (Salkind, 2008). Furthermore, Betz (2008) discusses how students navigate school, as well as their ability to avoid inappropriate behaviors. The lower the students perceived self-efficacy, the lower the goals they establish for themselves, and the less they achieve (Bandura,1992; Locke & Latham,1990; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1992). In fact, the current study reveals that the long-term suspension process is more punitive and detrimental to a student well-being, with these negative outcomes they far outweigh any potential benefits academically and socially. The impact of long-term suspension reverberates, considering that each participant in this study's failed to earn a high school diploma.

Diminished sense of well-being. Students, once long-term suspended, were found to experience a diminished sense of well-being, with no perceivable end in sight. Based on the findings from this study, long-term suspension from school was, and continues to be, a lifelong, traumatic experience, especially for students classified with an emotional disturbance and their parent/guardians. Since students classified with an emotional disturbance are known to have difficulty making appropriate decisions, their removal from their structured school setting, in order to attend an IAES, is worrisome. Because students frequently expressed a feeling of being considered guilty until proven

innocent, and because they often reported feeling alienated, unheard, uncared for, unsupported, unvalued, and misunderstood during their long-term suspension experience; these students' self-efficacy is seriously damaged. Furthermore, being long-term suspended negatively impacted their relationships with friends, teachers, administrators, and even family. Interestingly, although several years have passed since the incident which caused the student's long-term suspension, this experience continues to negatively impact their decision making and their motivation in life. This study supported Bandura's (1997) findings, in that students who experience on-going lack of success are more likely to develop a negative self-worth, resulting in future underachievement.

Overall, students and parent/guardians expressed outrage, bitterness, and resentment about their experiences with the long-term suspension process. Furthermore, through the conducted interviews, the students and parent/guardians revisited the circumstances with strong feelings that were very close to the surface. In many ways, this study mirrors the work of Bandura (1993). For example, this study demonstrated how the parent/guardians were heartbroken that their child never completed high school, continuing to impact their child's self-efficacy because they often show signs of depression and have difficulty managing their anxiety. To this day, all of the parent/guardians remain sincerely concerned about the overall well-being of their child, as well as their future. The experience of being long-term suspended caused their children to become disinterested, hurting their child's self-esteem, and as a result, caused them to withdraw from school to the point that they eventually dropped out. Additionally, the long-term suspensions did not fix anything. In fact, to the contrary, it worsened things for the students and their families, with the negative reverberations to this day.

The administrators in this study concurred that their experiences told them that long-term suspended students do not exhibit much hope and, often, become disconnected with school as a result of the entire experience. They also recognized the fact that students feel misunderstood, targeted, and treated unfairly, with the process wreaking havoc on the budding relationships between students and their families. The administrators in this study suggested that most schools don't even want the suspended student to return to their school, that the students are basically typecast as bad kids.

This finding is directly aligned with several researchers. First, Bandura, (1986, 1997) identified a correlation between student well-being at school and the theoretical framework of self-efficacy. ACU and Erebus International (2008) define well-being, in the educational context, as "a sustainable state of positive mood, attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school" (p.5). Considering Bandura's (1993) research, student self-efficacy directly affects the height and audacity of one's dreams. As such, an ineffective school discipline program is detrimental to the welfare of the student population, negatively influencing aspirations, motivations, and academic performance.

Long-term suspension process is broken. Finally, there is consensus that the long-term suspension system, as currently operated, is broken and need of comprehensive repair. Based on the findings from this study, all of the participants indicated that being long-term suspended was not a beneficial experience for the student. However, Bandura (1993) claimed that, "A major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, self-belief, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime." In fact, this study found that the long-term suspension process

has detrimental impacts on short-term and long-term student aspirations. Harvard Civil Rights (2000) study also found that students felt alienated from their regular school and lacking quality instruction, only serving to further inflame student hostility toward school. Furthermore, students did not communicate learning and growing as a result of this consequence. Bandura (1994) found that, when students with low self-efficacy are faced with challenging circumstances, they tend to dwell on their personal deficiencies. Accordingly, they anticipate tremendous challenges and, often feel overwhelmed and frustrated at their inability to overcome the perceived challenges. As a result of long-term suspension, this study's student participants never graduated from high school, giving up on their capabilities (Bandura, 1994).

Limitations

There were two limitations in this study. First, the sample size was small and consisted of only male participants. Given the small number of participants, consisting of; four students, five parent/guardians, and four school administrators the findings of this study may not be generalizable, considering the complexity of the experiences, the range of all personnel and the impact of long-term suspension, on all involved. The second, though unintended, limitation was the eventual selection of an all-male student participant pool.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study lead to recommendations for future research. First, future researchers might replicate this qualitative study, using a larger participant sample, in order to provide a fuller description of the phenomenon. Second, researchers might diversify their samples to compare the experiences and impact of long-term suspension

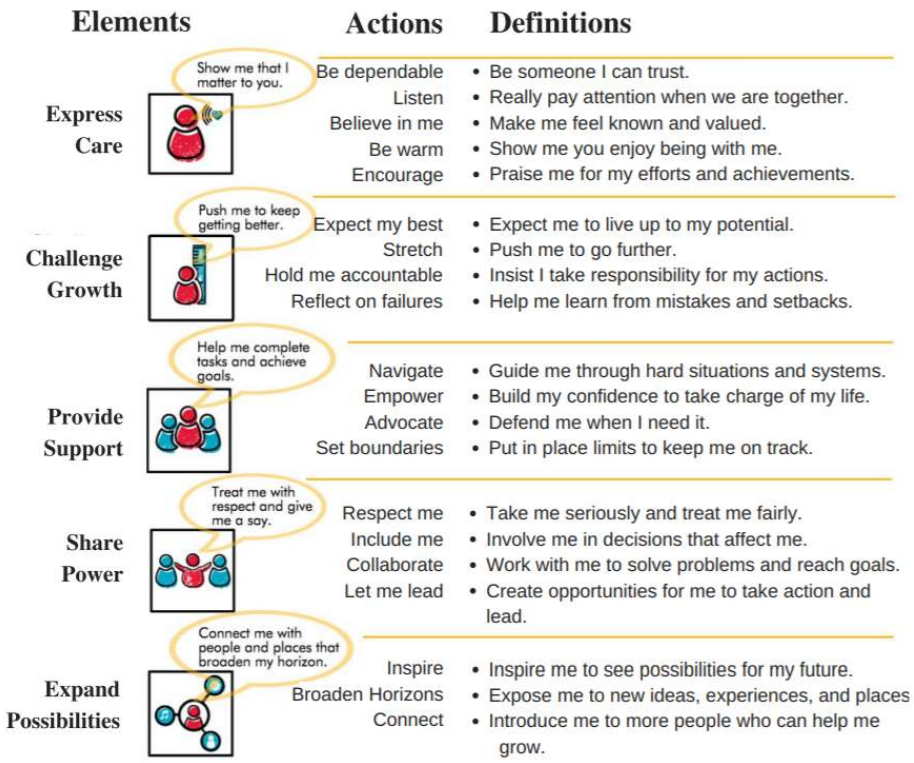
across societal barriers. Further research should make efforts to include females so that their stories are told and their experiences are recorded. Additionally, investigating the perceptions and experiences of students from suburban and rural school districts, as well as students within general education populations may yield different outcomes, contributing to the researched phenomenon.

Recommendations for Educators

The epidemic of long-term suspension particularly for students with an emotional disturbance, raises concerns about educational rights and failure to meet individual student needs (Kim, Losen, and Hewitt, 2010). Increasingly challenging, educators are expected to meet the needs of all students, including students classified with an emotional disturbance (Baker, 2005). As a result of the findings from this study, there are five recommendations that could be intertwined to improve the long-term suspension process: (a) develop quality relationships with students, (b) provide positive behavioral interventions, (c) establish restorative justice practices, (d) evaluate and improve instruction and, (e) alter and improve collaboration between students' home school and the interim alternative educational setting.

The first recommendation would be for school faculty members to make a genuine attempt to develop quality relationships, such that students gain a strengthened sense of self-efficacy and the overall school climate is improved (Bandura, 1994). Through the research of Coggshall, Osher & Colombi (2013), educators were found to play a significant role in preventing students from entering into the school-to-prison pipeline, through the establishment of consistent and positive relationships. According to Thapa et al., "The process of teaching and learning is fundamentally relational. The

pattern of norms, goals, values, and interactions that shape relationships in school provides is an essential area to school climate. One of the most important aspects of relationships in schools is how connected people feel to one another" (p. 363). Done through the creation of nurturing and caring relationships with students and families who have had previous experiences of violating school policies, future school suspension may be reduced (Townsend, 2000). One framework, The Relationships First Model, was created by the Search Institute and could be implemented by schools to revise current discipline methodology (Roehlkepartin et al., 2017). This framework invites various constituents throughout the school, and community, to focus on establishing strong relationships with young adults by focusing on five critical elements: (a) express care, (b) challenge growth, (c) provide support, (d) share power, (e) expand possibilities, through the utilization of 20 specific actions as indicated in Figure 4.1 (Roehlkepartin, et al., 2017). Furthermore, additional research suggests that school connectedness informs a student's sense of overall well-being and academic performance (Bandura, 1986, 1997; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997 Ruus et al., 2007; Whitlock, 2006).



Source: Relationships First: Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive

Figure 5.1. Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework Adapted from Roehlkepartin et al., 2017.

Although no single intervention method has been found effective with all children, or in all circumstances, implementing school-wide and classroom level interventions could improve student self-efficacy (Walker & Shea, 1998). Considering that students who are classified with an emotional disturbance receive disproportionate rates of disciplinary consequences, the second recommendation would be to provide positive behavioral interventions (Allman & Slate, 2013; Cornell, 2013; Tyler-Wood, Cereijo, & Pemberton, 2004). This recommendation would consist of a school selecting and implementing a school-wide, evidence based, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Ideally, this new program would prevent further marginalization through suspension such programs as: My Teaching Partner, Life-Space

Crisis Intervention, and school-based psychosocial violence prevention programs (Dawson, 2003; Cornell, 2013; Sullivan et al. 2014). For example, two approaches used in Life Space Crisis Intervention are "emotional-first-aid-on-the spot" and "clinical exploration of life events" (Life Space Interview and the Life Space Crisis Intervention, 2007; Redl &Wineman, 1957). Although each intervention approach has different strategies, such as how they deescalate volatile situations, resolve student problems, and identifying underlying issues behind negative student behavior; these interventions, a preferred alternative to suspension, have the potential to inspire the systematic change required for a more positive school climate (Redl &Wineman, 1957; Wilson, 2014).

Research has demonstrated that policies and practices that focus on repairing harm, establishing accountability, and creating a strong school community have been found to prevent future incidences. Therefore, the third recommendation would be to establish restorative justice practices (also referred to as restorative justice, restorative discipline, and restorative measures) (Bazemore, 2001; Healy 2106; Long & Fecser, 2001). Although there are several different models of restorative justice, circle conferencing would be recommended, particularly for high school students. This format would include participation of, not only the victim and the offender; but, also, everyone else involved or impacted from the incident. Such a large participant population would more efficiently restore, to the extent possible, student relationships (Coates, Vos, & Umbreit, 2003; Healy, 2016). For example, a restorative reentry meeting could be implemented, for the student, after serving a long-term suspension and prior to reintegrating into the home school. More specifically, the Restorative Practices Working Group (2014) created a model that focuses on improving relationships within the school

community when a student misbehaves. This restorative model also supports what is referred to as, "the emotional health, well-being and learning potential of the youth and all adult members of the school community" (Restorative Practices Working Group, 2014, pp. 15-16). Creating a safe space, and process, within which the misbehaved student can acknowledge the incident, discuss the effects the incident had on others, and work towards a resolution, would more adequately facilitate personal growth, repairing any harm done (Gregory & Skiba, 2017; Jones, 2013). As research has shown time and again, students feel more connected to their schools when school faculty demonstrates care and express help, and support for the student (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).

Regardless of the seriousness of the student's infraction, a free and appropriate education is mandated, and, as such, must be provided to students, even while attending an interim alternative educational setting (Cornell, 2013; Poucher, 2015). Therefore, the fourth recommendation would be to evaluate the quality of instruction and educational services, that students receive when serving their long-term suspension. First, school districts could create a guidance document to track and ensure students are provided with equal educational access to programs and services when serving their long-term suspension. Second, school districts could identify more creative approaches to provide additional academic support. For example, districts could utilize online recovery classes to ensure students have access to earn credit in courses they are enrolled in at their home school (Trotter, 2008). Additionally, districts could consider locating the interim alternative school setting in a community center where students can connect with community agencies to receive additional social/emotional support and interventions.

Lastly, considering the lifelong impact long-term suspension exerts on a student, the fifth recommendation would be for school districts to review, alter, and improve the collaboration and communication during the long-term suspension process. This study revealed a significant lack of collaboration and communication between the student's home school and the interim alternative educational setting. School districts that routinely suspend students on a long-term basis should provide a clear set of protocols and practices for when students are being recommended to serve a long-term suspension and then return to their home school. One research-based model that could be adapted for the long-term suspension process is the establishment of learning communities (Killion, 2015). Creating learning communities would promote a shared sense of accountability and continuity between the student's home school and the interim alternative educational setting. For example, members of the school faculty, such as the student's school social worker, a teacher, and a member of the administrative team could be a part of this support team, meant to ensure collective responsibility for the student's success. Specifically, these team members could participate in student intake, ensure on-going collaboration between the alternative program and home school, all while verifying that academic instruction is properly aligned. In this capacity, school personnel could ensure that the student is in attendance and that a reentry plan is in place to ease the transitions back into the school population, once the student has completed serving their long-term suspension.

Summary

The results of this study support previous research findings while adding to the evidence of the negative impact that long-term suspension has on students with special

needs, particularly students classified with an emotional disturbance. Research has shown that students who are suspended from school have a greater likelihood of dropping out, never earning a diploma, and having challenges with obtaining future employment (Dwyer, 1997). Furthermore, transformative experiences, such as long-term suspension from school, can have a lifelong impact on a student's trajectory. Therefore such use of exclusionary discipline tactics, such as long-term suspension, should raise significant concern and only be applied under extraordinary circumstances (Losen et al., 2015).

Utilizing the theoretical framework of Bandura (1993), this study aimed to gain perspectives on the "lived experiences" of students classified with an emotional disturbance who have served long-term suspension, their parent/guardians, and school administrators (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2016). Overall, the findings from this study, as well as Christle et al. (2004) and Bandura's (1994) research, suggest that policymakers, educators, and the public need to look beyond the student for answers, as to why they are unsuccessful in school, identifying ways in which students can find the perseverance needed to succeed. At the same time, communities need to fully understand that public schools are neither designed, nor equipped, to meet the myriad of needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Government and agency officials need to look beyond the educational system in order to closely examine how school districts can obtain more support for students through the connection of community resources and improvement of partnerships with various community agencies.

In summary, there is a critical need to address the punitive impact of long-term suspension for this marginalized population of students. Policymakers, educators, and the public must develop a clear vision for reducing the disproportionate rate of students with

special needs who are long-term suspended in order to improve the overall long-term suspension process. Considering the lifelong impact of this punitive consequence, more in-depth research on the experiences and impact of long-term suspension needs to occur. Furthermore, policymakers and school district leaders must promote the value of creating positive relationships with students, their parent/guardians, and across school communities, rather than promoting exclusionary practices (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). School district leaders must recognize that in most cases long-term suspension exacerbates the vulnerability of students with special needs towards negative outcomes. More researchers, administrators, teachers and parent/guardians must advocate for comprehensive reform of the discipline approaches employed in America's public schools.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions/Theoretical Chart & Alignment

Student Interview Questions	Research Question (RQ)	Section of Bandura's Theory (1997, 2006)
1.Tell me what you remember about being long-term suspended from school? a. Probe: What did you do? b. Probe: How were you treated? c. Probe: Describe how you felt. d. Probe: When were you LTS?	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
2. Describe what you remember about the long-term suspension hearing? a. Probe: Tell me how the hearing made you feel? b. Probe: How did you act? c. Probe: Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently during the hearing?	RQ 1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self Efficacy (SSE)
3. Share with me what your classes were like in your alternative placement? a. Probe: Tell me about your teachers in the alternative school? b. Probe: How would you describe your teacher's lessons? c. Probe: What classes did you take?	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
4. How did you get along with the staff and students at the alternative school? a. Probe: Tell me about the other students in the school.	RQ1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
5. Did you receive any extra support in the alternative school that was new or different? a. Probe: Describe the extra support you received. b. Probe: Who was involved in assisting you?	RQ1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA)
6. What do you feel was the impact of being long-term suspended on your learning and/or graduation? a. Probe: Can you recall if you had to retake any classes and why? b. Probe: How did being long-term suspended impact your final grades?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
7. Describe what your experience was like when you went back to your home school? a. Probe: How did others treat you?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
8. What, if anything did you learn as a result of being long-term suspended? a. Probe: Was there anything in particular you wish you would have done differently? b. Probe: What advice would you give another student who was long-term suspended?	RQ2	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Assertive Efficacy (SAE)

9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience? a. Probe: Overall, how do you feel being LTS impacted you? b. Probe: Tell me how being long-termed suspended was a positive or negative experience? c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE)

Parent/Guardians Interview Questions	Research Question (RQ)	Section of Bandura's Theory (1997, 2006)
1. Tell me what you remember about your child being long-term suspended from school? a. Probe: What did your child do? b. Probe: How was your child treated? c. Probe: Can you describe how your child felt.	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
2. Describe what you remember about the long-term suspension hearing? a. Probe: Tell me how the hearing made you feel? b. Probe: How did your child act? c. Probe: Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently during the hearing?	RQ 1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self Efficacy (SSE)
3. Share with me what your child's classes were like in their alternative placement? a. Probe: Tell me about your child's teachers in the alternative school? b. Probe: How would you describe your child's teacher's lessons? c. Probe: What classes did your child take?	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
4. How did your child get along with the staff and students at the alternative school? a. Probe: Tell me what you knew about the other students in the school.	RQ1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
5. Did your child receive any extra support in the alternative school that was new or different? a. Probe: Describe the type of extra support your child received? b. Probe: Who was involved in assisting your child?	RQ1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA)
6. What do you feel was the impact of being long-term suspended on your child's learning and/or graduation? a. Probe: Can you recall if your child had to retake any classes and why? b. Probe: How did being long-term suspended impact your son's final grades?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
7. Describe what your child's experience was like when went he back to their home school? a. Probe: How did others treat your child?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
8. What, if anything did your child learn as a result of being long-term suspended? a. Probe: Was there anything in particular you wish you would have done differently for your child? b. Probe: What advice would you give another student who was long-term suspended?	RQ2	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Assertive Efficacy (SAE)

9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience? a. Probe: Overall, how do you feel being LTS impacted your child? b. Probe: Tell me how being long-termed suspended was a positive or negative experience for your child? c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE)

Administrator Interview Questions	Research Question (RQ)	Section of Bandura's Theory (1997, 2006)
1. Tell about being long-term suspended from school? a. Probe: What do students do to receive a LTS? b. Probe: How are they treated when they are long-term suspended? c. Probe: Describe how students feel about the long-term suspension process.	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
2. What can you tell me about the long-term suspension hearing? a. Probe: How do you think students feel during the hearing? b. Probe: How do students act during the hearing? c. Probe: What might students do differently during the hearing?	RQ 1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Social Self Efficacy (SSE)
3. Share with me what classes are like in the alternative school? a. Probe: Tell me about the teachers in the alternative school? b. Probe: How would you describe lessons? c. Probe: What classes do students take?	RQ 1	Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
4. What contact if any do the school administrators have with the staff at the alternative setting once student has been assigned to serve their LTS? a. Probe: Tell me about the other students in the school.	RQ1	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
5. Do students receive any extra support in the alternative school that is new or different? a. Probe: What are the services and who assists the students?	RQ1	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA)
6. What is the impact of being long-term suspended on a student's learning and/or graduation? a. Probe: Do students have to retake any classes and why? b. Probe: How does being long-term suspended impact student's final grades?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement (AA) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning (SRL)
7. Describe what the experience was like when students returned to their home school? a. Probe: How do others treat returning students?	RQ2	Self-Efficacy to Meet Others' Expectations (MOE) Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)
8. What, if anything do students learn as a result of being long-term suspended? a. Probe: Is there anything in particular students would have done differently? b. Probe: What advice would you give students who are long-term suspended?	RQ2	Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE) Self-Assertive Efficacy (SAE)
9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience? a. Probe: Overall, how does being LTS impact students? b. Probe: Is being long-termed suspended a positive or negative experience		Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources (SR)

for students? c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?		Self-Regulatory Efficacy (SRE)

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction to Students

xxx, 2018

Dear xxx,

I am currently a doctorate student at St. John Fisher College and I'm conducting a study on the long-term suspension process. This study would take about 1 hour of your time and consist of an interview with just me. I will be asking you questions about when you were long-term suspended from school. I also need your permission to contact your parent/guardians so they can also be interviewed about their thoughts when you were long-term suspended.

I would be more than happy to meet you at a place of your choice during the next few weeks to conduct the interview. To protect your privacy, your name will not be used at all during this study. With your permission, I will record our conversation and take notes, which will be kept in a locked cabinet after the interview. I would also like you to know that you may withdraw from the study or refuse to answer certain questions at any time.

You will receive a $15 gift card for your time (even if you decide stop answering interview questions before the interview is over). The attached consent form describes the risks and benefits of participating in this study.

My professor at St. John Fisher College is Dr. Marie Cianca, and she can be reached at [redacted] or [redacted]. Also, if you would like a copy of the study when it's done, I would be happy to provide one to you.

I will follow up with you within the next 3-5 days to see if you would be interested in participating. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Samantha C. Brody
Email: [redacted]
Cell Phone:

Appendix C

Letter of Introduction to Parent/Guardians

xxx, 2018

Dear xxx,

I am currently a doctorate student at St. John Fisher College and I'm conducting a study on the long-term suspension process. This study would take about 1 hour of your time and consist of an interview with just me. I will be asking you questions about your thoughts as a parent/guardian of a student who has been long-term suspended and its overall impact.

I would be more than happy to meet you at a place of your choice during the next few weeks to conduct the interview. To protect your privacy, your name will not be used at all during this study. With your permission, I will record our conversation and take notes, which will be kept in a locked cabinet after the interview. I would also like you to know that you may withdraw from the study or refuse to answer certain questions at any time.

You will receive a $15 gift card for your time (even if you decide stop answering interview questions before the interview is over). The attached consent form describes the risks and benefits of participating in this study.

My professor at St. John Fisher College is Dr. Marie Cianca, and she can be reached at [redacted] or [redacted]. Also, if you would like a copy of the study when it's done, I would be happy to provide one to you.

I will follow up with you within the next 3-5 days to see if you would be interested in participating. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Samantha C. Brody
Email: [redacted]
Cell Phone:

Appendix D

Letter of Introduction to School Administrators

xxx, 2018

Dear xxx,

I am currently a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College conducting a study on the long-term suspension process and experience through the lens of students classified with an emotional disturbance, their guardians and school administrators. I am requesting your participation, which would consist of about an hour of your time for an individual interview.

Individual interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient place of your choice during the months of xxx and xxx. The focus of the conversation will be about your perspectives and experiences as a school administrator who has had firsthand experience with the long-term suspension process and its overall impact on students with special needs.

With your permission, I will record our conversation and take notes. The interviews will be transcribed, analyzed, and coded. For the purpose of protecting your privacy, recording and transcriptions will be kept in a secured locked cabinet. Your identity will remain anonymous during this study and after the dissertation is completed. You may withdraw from participation in the study or refuse to answer particular questions without penalty at any time. I will be asking questions during the interview and hope to establish an environment that is comfortable as we engage in a friendly conversation.

As a sign of appreciation for sharing your time and insights, you will receive a $15 gift card upon (even if you decide to withdraw before the interview has concluded). The attached consent form describes the risks and benefits of participating in this study. My faculty supervisor at St. John Fisher College is Dr. Marie Cianca, and she can be reached at [redacted] or [redacted]. Additionally, if you should be interested in a copy of the report once it is completed, I would be happy to provide one to you.

I would sincerely appreciate your participation and assistance in the completion of this dissertation. I will follow up with you within the next 3-5 days to see if you would be interested in participating. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha C. Brody
Email: [redacted] Phone: 585.766.1000 (cell)

Appendix E

January 31, 2018

File No: 3802-122117-0

Samantha Brody
St. John Fisher College

Dear Ms. Brody:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Full Review project, "Examining the Long-Term Suspension Process for Students Classified with an Emotional Disability". The Board considers your project adequate to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects as well as meeting the standards for informed consent.

As principal investigator, you are responsible for promptly reporting (in writing), through your department head, the following:

- The location where the signed consent forms will be kept on file for a period of 3 years.
- Progress reports of the research will be sent to the Board annually. If the research is not concluded within a year's time, you will need to petition the Board for a 1 year renewal.
- Any injuries to human subjects.
- Any unanticipated problems that involve risks to the human research subjects or others.
- Changes in a research activity.
- Changes in research during the period for which the Board approval has already been given shall not be initiated by research investigators without the Board review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. In such occurrences, the Board is to be notified as soon as possible.

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for 3 years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

On behalf of the Board, I wish you success with your research project.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at irb@sjfc.edu.
Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D Chair, Institutional Review Board

ELB: jdr

Appendix F

District Approval

March 8, 2018

Mrs. Samantha Brody 29

[redacted]

Research Title: ***Examining the Long-Term Suspension Process for Students with Disabilities***

Dear Mrs. Brody,

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in the [redacted] District. Each year the [redacted] District receives approximately 100 research and survey requests. As a result of a comprehensive review, the District's Institutional Review Board has approved your application. Upon receipt of your acceptance and signatory agreement, we will forward your research approval to our Legal Department to establish a Research Agreement. They will then forward the final document to you for your signature and agreement for execution. Only after the completion of such, will you then be able to execute and commence your research/study. Note that requirements associated with human subjects' confidentiality and related protections. FERPA and HIPPA adherence remain the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI). Adherence, as applicable to and maintenance of these standards is both expected and required as part of this approval.

Note such approvals *do not* suggest, imply, or include an agreement on the District's part to conduct any aspect of the study, obligate personnel to the study, or provide any level of interpretation or analysis of data related to the study. Such approved research, data collection, and required active consents, as applicable, remains the sole responsibility of the PI in full.

Finally, it is the expectation within the context of this approval and related agreement that all resultant data, analyses, and findings related to the study must be shared with and provided to the District's IRB Coordinator at the close of the study, as soon as is practicable.

If you agree with and accept this approval, please sign and date a copy of this letter within two weeks of the above date and return it to the District's IRB Coordinator.

We wish you every success in your future endeavors.

Very truly yours,

[redacted] Chair [redacted] Coordinator Applicant

XC:Department of Law

Department of Accountability - IRB/File

Appendix G

St. John Fisher College
Informed Consent Form

Title of study: Examining the Long-Term Suspension Process for Students Classified with an Emotional Disturbance
Name of researcher: Samantha Brody
Phone number: [redacted]
Faculty supervisor: Dr. Marie Cianca
Phone for further information: [redacted]

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions and unique experiences of the long-term suspension process for students classified with an emotional disturbance, their parent/guardians, and administrators (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Place of study: Students and their parent/guardians will participate in the interview at a public location of their choice. School administrators will have the option of participating in the interviews at their school or another district or public location.

Length of participation*:* Interviews are estimated to last approximately 60 minutes or until questions have been addressed and/or responded to.

Method(s) of data collection: All interviews will be recorded by using two digital voice recorders and notes will be taken. The interviews will be transcribed, analyzed and coded.

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:
Some risk exists for the students participating in this study as a result of the experiences associated with being long-term suspended. As a result, the interview may elicit an emotional response that represents more than minimal risk. Minimal risk exists for the parent/guardians and administrators participating in this study, as the probability of and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during routine tests. Participants will be audio-recorded during interviews. There are no additional anticipated emotional or physical risks associated with participating in this study. By participating in this study, participants will contribute to study results, which will add to the current body of research long-term suspensions. As a sign of appreciation for sharing their time and

insights participants will receive a $15 gift card, even if they chose to withdraw before the conclusion of the study.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects: Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: All consent is voluntary. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants. Participants' names and identifying information will remain confidential and will not appear in transcripts, analysis, or the final study.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected:
All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of 5 years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for 5 years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

Your rights:
As a research participant, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____	_____	_____
Print name (Participant)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Print name (Investigator)	Signature	Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above at [redacted] or [redacted]. If you are currently an enrolled student in the WCSD and experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, and you need assistance, please call the district's mental health counseling services, Office of Social Work @ [redacted]. If you are no longer enrolled in the

WCSD and experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, and you need assistance, please call Strong Behavioral Health @ 585.275.3535. The researcher is available to help connect you with either district or community services if needed.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact [redacted] by phone during normal business hours at [redacted] or irb@sjfc.edu. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

Appendix H

Student Interview Guide: Questions/Process

Semi-structured interview questions has a sequence of themes to be covered through prepared questions and also have openness to change the sequence and questions based on the interviewed responded (Kvale, 2013)

Name: _____ Code Name: _____
DOB: _____
Current Age: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Gender: _____

Start Time of Interview: _____

I. Introduction:

Hello. My name is Samantha Brody, and I'm a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. For my dissertation, I am studying the effects of long-term suspension. The purpose of this study is to provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences and how it impacted you socially/emotionally as well as academically. I also wanted to let you know there is the possibility that the results of this research could potentially improve upon school practices and policies for current students.

Additionally, this study has been approved by SJFC and the WCSD. I am the only researcher working on this project. I anticipate that the interview will last about 1 hour. I want to thank you for your willingness to volunteer in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Just before we start the interview I wanted to remind you of a few things:

1. *As a participant in this interview/study, you are free to pass on any question or withdrawal from the interview at any time. So if you don't feel comfortable answering a particular question just let me know and we will move on to the next question.*
2. *If you would like me to come back to a particular question, please let me know as well.*
3. *If at any point during the interview you have questions, feel free to ask them.*
4. *Your participation will be kept completely anonymous. In other words, your name or any identifying characteristics will not be disclosed (MacCracken, 2000).*
5. *Please don't mention any specific names during the interview to protect those individuals' privacy.*

6. *Also, please know that I'm using 2 recording devices just in case one isn't working correctly and I will be taking some notes during the interview. I'm taking some notes to help me remember key points, and I might also jot down follow-up questions that I would like to ask you as we are talking.*

Please remember, I am interested in your personal experiences, and therefore there are no right or wrong answers. I really want you to feel comfortable and that we have a great conversation. Again, thank you so much for your willingness to assist me with this study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II. Interview Questions

A. The first series of questions is going to ask you about your experiences when you were long-term suspended:

1. Tell me what you remember about being long-term suspended from school?
    a. Probe: What did you do?
    b. Probe: How were you treated?
    c. Probe: Describe how you felt.
    d. Probe: When were you LTS?
2. Describe what you remember about the long-term suspension hearing?
    a. Probe: Tell me how the hearing made you feel?
    b. Probe: How did you act?
    c. Probe: Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently during the hearing?
3. Share with me what your classes were like in your alternative placement?
    a. Probe: Tell me about your teachers in the alternative school?
    b. Probe: How would you describe your teacher's lessons?
    c. Probe: What classes did you take?
4. How did you get along with the staff and students at the alternative school?
    a. Probe: Tell me about the other students in the school.
5. Did you receive any extra support in the alternative school that was new or different?
    a. Probe: Describe the type of extra support you received?
    b. Probe: Who was involved in assisting you?

B. For the last series of questions, I would like you to think about how being long-term suspended affected you during and after serving the suspension:

6. What do you feel was the impact of being long-term suspended on your learning and/or graduation?
    a. Probe: Can you recall if you had to retake any classes and why?
    b. Probe: How did being long-term suspended impact your final grades?
7. Describe what your experience was like when you went back to your home school?
    a. Probe: How did others treat you?
8. What, if anything did you learn as a result of being long-term suspended?
    a. Probe: Was there anything in particular you wish you would have done differently?

b. Probe: What advice would you give another student who was long-term suspended?

9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience?
    a. Probe: Overall, how do you feel being LTS impacted you?
    b. Probe: Tell me how being long-termed suspended was a positive or negative experience?
    c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?

III. Debrief / Closing

I have no further questions. That will conclude my portion of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to bring up or ask about before we finish the interview? Should you have any questions, I would like to provide you with my email and cell number. From here I'm going to finish conducting my interviews and then I will begin putting together the results. However, there is the possibility that I might reach out to you again if need to clarify one of your responses. If you would like, I will send you a copy of my dissertation summary. Eventually, my goal is to share the results with the WCSD and potentially make some recommendations for improvement. Again, thank you so much for your time.

End time of interview _____

Time elapsed _____

(Baker, 2002; Bandura, 1997, 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)

Appendix I

Parent Interview Guide: Questions / Process

Parent's Name: _____ Code Name: _____
Child's Name: _____ Code Name: _____
Ethnicity: _____
Gender: _____

Start Time of Interview: _____

I. Introduction:

Hello. My name is Samantha Brody, and I'm a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher, and for my dissertation, I am studying the effects of long-term suspension for students with special needs. The purpose of this study is to provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences with your child and how it impacted them socially/emotionally as well as academically. I also wanted to let you know that there is the possibility that the results of this research could potentially improve upon school practices and policies for current students.

Additionally, this study has been approved by SJFC and the WCSD. I am the only researcher working on this project. I anticipate that the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I want to thank you for your willingness to volunteer in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Just before we start the interview I wanted to remind you of a few things:

1. *As a participant in this interview/study, you are free to pass on any question or withdrawal from the interview at any time. So if you don't feel comfortable answering a particular question just let me know and we will move on to the next question.*
2. *If you would like me to come back to a particular question, please let me know as well.*
3. *If at any point during the interview you have questions, feel free to ask them.*
4. *Your participation will be kept completely anonymous. In other words, your name or any identifying characteristics will not be disclosed (MacCracken, 2000).*
5. *Please don't mention any specific names during the interview to protect those individuals' privacy.*
6. *Also, please know that I'm using 2 recording devices just in case one isn't working correctly and I will be taking some notes during the interview. I'm taking some notes to help me remember key points, and I might also jot down follow-up questions that I would like to ask you as we are talking.*

Please remember, I am interested in your personal experiences, and therefore there are no right or wrong answers. I really want you to feel comfortable and that we have a great conversation. Again, thank you so much for your willingness to assist me with this study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II. Interview Questions

A. The first series of questions is going to ask you about you and your child's experiences when they were long-term suspended:

1. Tell me what you remember about your child being long-term suspended from school?
    a. Probe: What did your child do?
    b. Probe: How was your child treated?
    c. Probe: Can you describe how you felt when your child was long-term suspended.
2. Describe what you remember about the long-term suspension hearing?
    a. Probe: Tell me how the hearing made you feel?
    b. Probe: How did your child act?
    c. Probe: Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently during the hearing?
3. Share with me what your child's classes were like in their alternative placement?
    a. Probe: Tell me about your child's teachers in the alternative school?
    b. Probe: How would you describe your child's teacher's lessons?
    c. Probe: What classes did your child take?
4. How did your child get along with the staff and students at the alternative school?
    a. Probe: Tell me what you knew about the other students in the school.
5. Did your child receive any extra support in the alternative school that was new or different?
    a. Probe: Describe the type of extra support your child received?
    b. Probe: Who was involved in assisting your child?

B. For the last series of questions, I would like you to think about how being long-term suspended affected your child during and after serving the suspension?

6. What do you feel was the impact of being long-term suspended on your child's learning and/or graduation?
    a. Probe: Can you recall if your child had to retake any classes and why?
    b. Probe: How did being long-term suspended impact your son's final grades?
7. Describe what your child's experience was like when you went he back to their home school?
    a. Probe: How did others treat your child?
8. What, if anything did your child learn as a result of being long-term suspended?
    a. Probe: Was there anything in particular you wish you would have done differently for your child?
    b. Probe: What advice would you give another student who was long-term

suspended?

9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience?
    a. Probe: Overall, how do you feel being LTS impacted your child?
    b. Probe: Tell me how being long-termed suspended was a positive or negative experience for your child?
    c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?

III. Debrief / Closing

I have no further questions. That will conclude my portion of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to bring up, or ask about before we finish the interview? Should you have any questions, I would like to provide you with my email and cell number. From here I'm going to finish conducting my interviews and then I will begin putting together the results. However, there is the possibility that I might reach out to you again if need to clarify one of your responses. If you would like I will send you a copy of my dissertation summary. Eventually, my goal is to share the results with the WCSD and potentially make some recommendations for improvement. Again, thank you so much for your time.

End time of interview _____

Time elapsed _____

(Baker, 2002; Bandura, 1997, 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)

Appendix J

Administrator Interview Guide: Questions / Process

Name: _____ Code Name: _____
Years in Administration: _____
Start Time of Interview: _____

I.Introduction:

Hello. My name is Samantha Brody, and I'm a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. For my dissertation, I am studying the effects of long-term suspension. The purpose of this study is to research the effects of long-term suspensions for students with special needs and provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences of long-term suspending students and how you perceive it impacted the student socially/emotionally as well as academically. I also wanted to let you know there is the possibility that the results of this research could potentially improve upon school practices and policies for current students.
Additionally, this study has been approved by SJFC and the WCSD. I am the only researcher working on this project. I anticipate that the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I want to thank you for your willingness to volunteer in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated.
Just before we start the interview I wanted to remind you of a few things:

1. *As a participant in this interview/study, you are free to pass on any question or withdrawal from the interview at any time. So if you don't feel comfortable answering a particular question, just let me know and we will move on to the next question.*
2. *If you would like* me *to come back to a particular question please let me know as well.*
3. *If at any point during the interview you have questions, feel free to ask them.*
4. *Your participation will be kept completely anonymous. In other words, your name or any identifying characteristics will not be disclosed (MacCracken, 2000). Is there a particular name you would like me to use?*
5. *Please don't mention any specific names during the interview to protect those individuals' privacy.*
6. *Also, please know that I'm using 2 recording devices just in case one isn't working correctly and I will be taking some notes during the interview. I'm taking some notes to help me remember key points, and I might also jot down follow-up questions that I would like to ask you as we are talking.*

Please remember, I am interested in your personal experiences, and therefore there are no right or wrong answers. I really want you to feel comfortable and that we have a

great conversation. Again, thank you so much for your willingness to assist me with this study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II. Interview Questions

A. The first series of questions is going to ask you about your students' experiences when they were long-term suspended:

1. Tell me about being long-term suspended from school?
    - a. Probe: What do students do to receive a LTS?
    - b. Probe: How are they treated when they are long-term suspended?
    - c. Probe: Describe how you felt about the long-term suspension process.
2. What can you tell me about the long-term suspension hearing?
    - a. Probe: How did you feel during the hearing?
    - b. Probe: How do students act during the hearing?
    - c. Probe: What might students do differently during the hearing?
3. Share with me what classes are like in the alternative school?
    - a. Probe: Tell me about the teachers in the alternative school?
    - b. Probe: How would you describe lessons?
    - c. Probe: What classes do students take?
4. What contact if any do the school administrators have with the staff at the alternative setting once student has been assigned to serve their LTS?
    - a. Probe: Tell me about the other students in the school.
5. Do students receive any extra support in the alternative school that is new or different?
    - a. Probe: What are the services and who assists the students?

B. For the last series of questions, I would like you to think about how being long-term suspended affected students during and after serving the suspension?

6. What is the impact of being long-term suspended on a student's learning and/or graduation?
    - a. Probe: Do students have to retake any classes and why?
    - b. Probe: How does being long-term suspended impact students final grades?
7. Describe what the experience was like when students returned to their home school?
    - a. Probe: How do others treat returning students?
8. What, if anything do students learn as a result of being long-term suspended?
    - a. Probe: Is there anything in particular students would have done differently?
    - b. Probe: What advice would you give students who are long-term suspended?
9. What are some changes the district could make in the long-term suspension process a more successful experience?
    - a. Probe: Overall, how does being LTS impact students?
    - b. Probe: Is being long-termed suspended a positive or negative experience for students?

c. Probe: What suggestions do you have for the faculty at the alternative school?

III. Debrief / Closing:

I have no further questions. That will conclude my portion of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to bring up or ask about before we finish the interview? Should you have any questions, I would like to provide you with my email and cell number. From here I'm going to finish conducting my interviews and then I will begin putting together the results. However, there is the possibility that I might reach out to you again if need to clarify one of your responses. If you would like, I will send you a copy of my dissertation summary. Eventually, my goal is to share the results with the WCSD and potentially make some recommendations for improvement. Again, thank you so much for your time.

End time of interview _____

Time elapsed _____

(Baker, 2002; Bandura, 1997, 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)