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THE IMPACT OF A CHARACTER EDUCATION BASED INTERACTIVE DISCIPLINE PROGRAM ON AT-RISK STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

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PROGRAM ON AT-RISK STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Student problem behavior is incompatible with academic achievement and positive interpersonal relationships. It has become necessary for schools to develop codes of conduct to address inappropriate student behavior. But, current school disciplinary policies are ineffective instruments for effecting positive change in student problem behavior (Goodman, 2006). In response to this problem, public school districts are developing a wide variety of approaches to dealing with the needs of problem behavior students. One approach has been the development of alternative high school programs - school district initiatives specifically designed to meet the needs of students lacking success in the traditional high school setting.

This study explores the impact of a character education based interactive discipline program on student problem behavior of at-risk students in an alternative high school setting. Participants in this study included 97 students (37 female, 60 male) during the first school year of the study (2004 – 2005) and 90 students (34 female, 56 male) during the second (2005 – 2006) from a large suburban school district. Ninety-three percent of the students were Caucasian, 3% were African American and 3% were Hispanic. Forty-nine students (19 female, 30 male) were enrolled in the school during both years of the study.

The data revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the use of a traditional approach to discipline and the use of a character education based interactive discipline program in reducing recidivism for students who participated in the study over one year (t = -.059, df = 83, p = .504) or over two years (t = -1.309, df = 36, p = .09). The data also revealed there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in raising student GPAs over one year (t = -1.225, df = 80, p = .112) or over two years (t = -1.794, df = 38, p = .945). Similarly, the data revealed that there was no statistically significant correlation between change in GPA and recidivism over one year (R = -0.18, p = .215) or over two years (R = -0.23, p = .314).

DEDICATIONS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who helped make this dream a reality. I would like to begin with a special thank you to my committee. Dr. Marvin Berkowitz never allowed me to submit anything less than quality work. It was his efforts that made it possible for me to work closely with the MindOH! L.L.C. staff in the first place to make this project a reality. Dr. Vic Battistich tirelessly provided his expertise in statistical analysis and format. He was always available when I needed help. Dr. Kathleen Brown has advised me through many years, first through my masters degree and then through my specialist certificate. She has spent many hours proofreading and guiding me through the process. Dr. Carole Murphy stepped in when I needed a committee member and was a constant source of encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Elisha Chambers for the support she added at the beginning of the project and Dr. Cody Ding for agreeing to read my dissertation and serve on my committee last minute.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF LITERATURE

AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

It is estimated that one half of all classroom time in public secondary schools is spent on activities not related to instruction and that student discipline problems account for much of this time (Manke, 2005). According to the Annual Phi Delta Kappan/ Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (2002), "lack of discipline" is the number one identified problem in the nation's schools. The difficulty for teachers is that classroom discipline problems have become commonplace in America's secondary schools (Lapointe & Legault, 2004). The impact and struggle of dealing with discipline often reduces time on task, and consequently, academic achievement. After the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education , 1983), many school districts began evaluating student outcomes in terms of behavior and competence (Raywid, 1994). Many indicators show that disruptive behaviors - those student activities in the classroom or hallway that interrupt the instruction of other students - account for as much of the academic failure among America's youth as does academic performance (Lapointe & Legault, 2004). In response to this problem, public school districts are investigating a wide variety of approaches to dealing with the needs of students who engage in problem behaviors. One approach has been the proliferation of alternative high school programs - school district initiatives specifically designed to meet the needs of students lacking success in the traditional high school setting. Although there is no specific documentation of the number and kinds of alternative schools in existence today, a study conducted by the National Center

for Educational Statistics during the 2000-2001 school year, revealed almost 40% of all public school districts in America had alternative schools or programs, and that number is growing. Alternative schools are emerging as a common approach to serving many of our youth who have not succeeded in the traditional setting (Lehr, 2003).

Although alternative programs are not a new educational innovation, the need for them has been minimal in the past. Historically, alternative schools and programs have served a range of students with varying interests, background and abilities (Lehr, 2003). In fact, most early alternative programs were designed to meet specific interests of students, such as trade school, rather than to address those with behavior problems. However, as problem behavior among students has grown, and more students are being placed at-risk of not graduating, the need for alternative schools designed to address this matter has gained great support across the country. As such, public alternative schools, including charter schools, have begun to flourish.

One problem alternative school educators face is many students come to these programs with few socially acceptable values and morals and lacking rudimentary social skills (Gathercoal & Crowell, 2000). In addition, the students come from homes with few models of what it is to live in a civil society (Gathercoal & Crowell, 2000). Teaching social skills has now become an expectation of alternative school programs. Teaching social skills communicates expectations for behavior to students (McArthur, 2002). Students need to learn they have choices and to plan their behavior (Mendler, 1992). Thus, educators who work in the alternative school setting need to help students develop a better sense of proper behaviors. In an effort to expand upon teaching opportunities that redirect student problem behaviors, many schools are turning to character education programs (Berkowitz, 1998).

Similar to the alternative school movement, character education initiatives are rich in history (Berkowitz, Schaefer, & Bier, 2001). Although "moral education" in American schools can be traced back to the early 17th century (McClellan, 1999), today's character education movement has its roots in efforts stemming from the mid-1960's. In sharp contrast to the early efforts coming out of this time period, such as *values clarification, cognitive developmentalism,* and *feminism*, other recent efforts have favored more traditional, virtue-centered approaches (McClellan, 1999).

One reason for the variations in moral education movements is that many character educators fail to offer a formal definition of character (Berkowitz, 1998). In response to this dilemma, modern day character educators worked collaboratively to develop key components of moral character and to offer a working definition. Probably the most widely accepted definition comes from Thomas Lickona. Lickona (1991) states, "Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good - habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action" (p. 51). The difficulty for educators is how to implement a comprehensive character education program that can be used to develop good habits of the mind, the heart, and action.

One challenge for educators today is that children are continually exposed to violence, sarcasm, and disregard for human dignity by watching too much television and other media (Lickona, 1991). It is easy to see where their negative behavior comes from. Students need social skills to participate in learning activities that are used most commonly in the classroom (McArthur, 2002)

Successful learning is least likely to occur in classrooms where simple social skills such as respect and responsibility are lacking. Deno (1998) argued that academic progress is

incompatible with disruptive social behavior. Unless students treat each other with courtesy and respect, learning activities will not be productive. Moreover, when good manners are evident in the classroom, student self-esteem and self-respect increase (Tyler-Wood, Cereijo, & Pemberton, 2004).

One of the problems of implementing a character education program designed to develop social skills in students is found in the type of discipline program most commonly used by schools to handle problem behaviors – punishment systems (see review of literature section for discussion on punishment and behavior modification). Character education programs focus on getting students to behave in circumstances in a certain manner. But, punishment is used to induce people *not* to behave in a given way (Skinner, 1971). According to B.F. Skinner (1971), "the word punishment is usually confined to contingencies intentionally arranged by other people, who arrange them because the results are reinforcing to them" (p. 61). This is true of school discipline programs. While it is true that punishment may sometimes stop misbehavior quickly, it only provides a temporary solution and often results in student anger (Lapointe & Legault, 2004). In addition, since punishment is designed to remove awkward, dangerous, and otherwise unwanted behaviors (Skinner, 1971) without replacing those behaviors with appropriate responses, school discipline programs often fall short in their efforts to reduce student misbehavior. Alternative approaches that can result in the more stable improvement of social skills must be explored for dealing with student misbehavior.

This study seeks to examine the effects of one particular approach to character education on student behavior in an alternative school. Specifically, this study seeks to evaluate the use of a character education based discipline approach developed by MindOH!

L.L.C. (2001). This approach incorporates the use of a web-based interactive character

education discipline program. The MindOH! L.L.C. interactive program incorporates within

its program a method for redirecting student behavior through a question and answer

discussion addressing a specific violation. In addition, the program supports the student

navigating their way through the disciplinary process by offering life skills lessons based on

specific positive character traits.

MindOH! L.L.C

MindOH! L.L.C. was created as part of an effort to develop measurable character

education software systems that effectively increase high school completion rates and

decrease suspensions, dropout rates and alternative school transfers in secondary schools,

juvenile justice and youth organizations (Manke, 2003). One desire of the company was to

offer direct support to administrators and students during the disciplinary process. Based

upon the philosophy that all individuals have within them the inner resources for the

development of strong character and a healthy concept, the MindOH! L.L.C. founding

professionals committees a goal of developing a program that provides the appropriate

application that promotes the internal motivation for students to make sound and healthy

choices for themselves (Manke, 2003).

The following is a summary of the development of MindOH! L.L.C. Information

presented in this section was provided by Ms. Leslie Matula, President and Founder of the

MindOH! L.L.C.   According to Matula (personal communication, January, 2007):

As a veteran public school volunteer in the Houston Independent School District, I

spent many years on public school campuses. My personal observations revealed to

me that students sent to the office for discipline referrals frequently sat outside the

principal's office for as much as an hour while waiting for an administrator to address the infraction. As an educator, I believed this time was not only being wasted, but was counterproductive to a process designed to change problem behaviors in students. My observations were that students used most of this "wait" time reflecting on how to justify their misbehavior and ways to manipulate their way out of trouble. In some cases the student spent the wait time reflecting on the event that sent them to the office. With no place to go to share their frustrations their emotions escalated, making matters worst. I also observed administrators overburdened with the discipline process and that discipline referrals were taking up a great deal of their time.

In the summer of 2000, Matula began working with Dr. Rob Pennington, a well-respected educational psychologist and corporate trainer, to develop on-line training tools for adults. During this time, she began investigating how the on-line training concept might be applied to students involved in the discipline process who would otherwise be sitting idly while waiting to see an administrator. Both Pennington and Matula understood that this generation of students has a good working knowledge of computers. It was their belief that a computer based character education approach to discipline could engage students who might otherwise be resistant to authority figures and changing their behaviors (M. Matula, personal communication, January, 2007).

Matula continued:

Robert Pennington, Ph.D., along with his business partner Stephan Haslam, began working with Ms. Matula on the MindOH! concept.   Pennington and Haslam specialized in working with individuals and organizations undergoing stressful change. Their specialty training involved reducing resistance to change in individuals

and organizations, team building and conflict resolution. However, they lacked a

working knowledge of character education in public schools. The company brought

Ms. Dot Woodfin, the Character Education Director of the Houston Independent

School District at the time, as a resource. In addition to her work in education,

Woodfin had a business background that would help in expanding the program.

I met with Woodfin regarding the MindOH! concept to determine if she thought it

would be a useful tool for students and educators. Woodfin thought it would be and in

turn spoke with fellow educators and administrators seeking their input. She received

positive feedback in regard to how a computer-based character education program

could support the disciplinary process in schools.

Shortly after the initial feedback was received, the MindOH! Corporation added Beth

Carls and Amy Looper, business partners who had co-founded an e-commerce company, to

the team. Carls and Looper brought a vast network of experts and experiences with them in

the field of Web-based technologies and strategies. Both had a long desire to help young

people at-risk and were excited about exploring programs to assist these students (B. Carls,

personal communication, January, 2007).

In April of 2001, MindOH! L.L.C. launched its initial character education series as

part of a pilot program in the Houston Independent School District, TX. The program was

designed to accommodate a variety of school discipline management initiatives (Manke,

2003). The series consists of three modules: (1) *What's Up? Student Incident Report;* (2)

Rule 1: Respect; (3) *Taking Charge: Responsibility* (see Appendix A for MindOH! Process

Flow Chart). The goal of the series is to assist administrators in redirecting student

misbehavior by focusing on character traits through dialogue and reflection during the

disciplinary process. This approach to discipline was titled the Assistant Principal Model by MindOH! L.L.C. (Manke, 2005).

Traditional Discipline Models Vs MindOH! Discipline Series

In the traditional model of discipline, a student is referred to the principal's office by a teacher or other adult professional in response to a specific problem behavior. The administrator then reviews the information and assigns a consequence, usually based upon a code of conduct handbook developed by a team of administrators from within the school or district. In most cases the consequence assigned is based more upon punitive measures for stopping the behavior than on relevant consequences aimed at teaching the student positive behavior skills (Goodman, 2006). Relevant consequences are those actions that occur as a result of the misbehavior that directly correlate to it; i.e., assigning a student to a smoking cessation class if caught smoking on campus. Traditional consequences for student misbehavior include in-school suspension, Saturday School, detention, and out-of-school suspension.

In the MindOH! *Discipline Series*, students who are referred to the principal's office for a disciplinary infraction are first given the opportunity to reflect on the problem behavior through the use of a web-based interactive character education series. The student is directed to complete the first module of the series, *What's Up? Student Incident Report*, which produces a *Student Incident Report*. The student is then directed to share the report with the administrator addressing the matter. After reviewing the document, the assistant principal meets with the student to discuss his or her emotions at the time and to reflect on the problem behavior. After this time of reflection, the student is referred back to the MindOH! series for the purpose of completing a study focused on the value of respect and

responsibility in the classroom. The administrator in charge again meets with the student to

determine any further course of action necessary to address the problem behavior (see Table

1.1 for summary of disciplinary approaches).

Table 1.1 - MODELS OF DISCIPLINE

_____

Traditional Model: Event > adult intervention > consequence

MindOH! Assistant Principal Model:
Event > MindOH! Series 1 > adult discussion > MindOH! Series 2 > adult discussion >
consequence and MindOH! Series 3

_____

The Problem

Student problem behavior is incompatible with academic achievement and positive

interpersonal relationships. As such, it has become necessary for schools to develop policies

to address inappropriate student behavior. But, it has been argued that many school

disciplinary policies are ineffective instruments for effecting positive change in student

problem behavior (Goodman, 2006). This is often due to the reality that school codes of

conduct rest on consequences that are poorly justified and fail to distinguish the difference

between moral violations (violence, vandalism, deception) from conventional school-limited

violations (attendance, dress codes, eating venues) leaving the impression that the violation

of cafeteria rules and plagiarism are equivalent (Goodman, 2006). To some extent, school

discipline codes have become so focused on consequences that they fail to redirect student

problem behaviors towards positive behavior actions.

One problem is that discipline has simply become submission to the rules. In today's

society, the rules of discipline have become so focused on creating a safe and orderly

environment that they cease to have any intrinsic learning value of their own. Moreover,

obedience to rules has begun to overshadow their content as the focus of discipline has

increasingly shifted from one of correction to one of sanctions (Goodman, 2006). However,

if schools are to take seriously the moral development of students as a component of

improving academic achievement and positive interpersonal skills, their discipline codes

should become a conduit for moral instruction (Goodman, 2006). Yet many current school

codes of conduct fail to do so.

Consider two hypothetical scenarios based upon the *Code of Conduct Handbook* of a

suburban school district in the metropolitan St. Louis area. Each of the following scenarios

takes place in a high school setting. In the first scenario, a young male student is more

interested in the social aspects of school than the academic side. He is well liked by the

teachers with whom he has class as well as the other students. He is cooperative with school

authorities and rarely is referred to the principal's office. He does have a few passing grades

even though his interests at school lie outside the academic realm. One day the young

student comes to school but is not very interested in his afternoon classes. He decides he will

join a few friends in the park after lunch instead of attending his last two classes. His last

period teacher notices he was present earlier in the day and writes a truancy referral slip to

the office for the student. The next day the student is confronted by his supervising principal

and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct Handbook, is assigned detention for three days,

for punitive measures, not for the purpose of making up missed work. He is assigned zeros

for all work missed during the two classes from which he was truant. Although generally

cooperative, he fails to attend his three days of detention. Again, he is confronted by an

administrator and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct Handbook, assigned a Saturday

detention. Again, no class work is assigned during the detention time since he is not allowed

to make up any missed work that occurred as a result of the truancy. The young man does not

attend the Saturday detention since, from his perspective, there is nothing to gain. On

Monday he returns to school only to be called again to the principal's office. Upon

confirming he did not attend Saturday detention, he is immediately given a three day out-of-

school suspension, again, in accordance with the Code of Conduct Handbook. However, he

will be allowed to make up missed work during the suspension for 70% credit.

In this scenario the school administrator is confronted with the problem of addressing

an attendance issue with a young male student who is not very interested in school. Although

the administrator recognizes that the student lacks motivation academically, he or she is at a

loss for redirecting the student's behavior because of the limits of school policy and the Code

of Conduct Handbook. In addition, since the behavior was not redirected satisfactorily, the

student's opportunities for learning diminish and ultimately his grades suffer. Not only is the

problem behavior, lack of responsibility, not addressed, the consequences he receives offer

no opportunity to improve learning and the behavior escalates.

In the second scenario, a young female student is highly motivated in school and

plans to attend a four-year college after graduation. Although she does well in school, she is

not particularly liked by the staff and has very few friends. She rarely misses class and

completes all work assigned in a timely manner. However, she is often rude to her peers and

disrespectful to the staff. She has been referred to the principal's office on a number of

occasions. During one class period, the student becomes particularly agitated with the

students around her and chooses to use obscene and disparaging language in a harassing

manner to those in close proximity. She is immediately referred to the principal's office for

discipline. In accordance with the Code of Conduct Handbook, the young lady is given three

after-school detentions. Although she is not in agreement with the consequence, she serves the detentions successfully.

Only two days after successfully completing her detentions, the young lady finds herself in the principal's office for a situation similar to the week before. Once again she was derogatory towards other students and disrespectful to the staff. This time, since it is a second offense, and in accordance with the Code of Conduct Handbook, the female student is assigned an out-of-school suspension for three days. Similar to the student in the first case scenario, she is allowed to make up missed work during the suspension for 70% credit.

Similar to the first scenario, the administrator was faced with a problem behavior which could not be adequately addressed by the consequences available for him or her to assign. The student's problem behavior, overt disrespect to others, was not being confronted or dealt with in a direct manner. In addition to not redirecting the student's behavior, and similar to the first case scenario, the student's opportunity for learning ultimately suffered.

In both cases, the administrator was faced with the problem of addressing inappropriate student behavior of a moral nature – respect and responsibility. Consequences for addressing the specific actions of the students, as outlined in detail in the Student Code of Conduct Handbook, were assigned; but the moral value broken was never addressed and the problem behavior ceased to change. In both cases, opportunities in the classroom for learning were reduced and, as such, academics suffered. In the first case, academic failure served as an outcome of the consequences. Ultimately, the male student could be classified as "at-risk" of academic failure and referred to an alternative school placement.

Scenarios such as those given above have become common in today's public school environment. Student discipline codes are being written to administer conventional

consequences to students who fail to "follow the rules" rather than promote social development – particularly ones of a moral nature. Obedience to rules has become the norm as the focus of discipline has shifted to sanctions instead of correction and development (Goodman, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a character education based interactive discipline program on student problem behavior in a secondary school setting. Specifically, this study seeks to examine data collected as part of a larger study to explore the impact of such a program on the behaviors of at-risk students attending an alternative school program. This research is not intended to serve as a replication study of the larger study of which its data are a part. The focus of this evaluation is specific to at-risk students attending an alternative school program. Nor is this study a replication of an earlier project conducted regarding the impact of the MindOH! *Discipline Series* on problem behaviors of students attending five traditional middle schools located in the Houston Independent School District.

The purpose of the two year study conducted in the Houston Independent School District, completed July, 2003, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the MindOH! *Discipline Series* in assisting administrators and students through the disciplinary process. This evaluation process involved establishing the short term goals of the program (see table 1.2) and then analyzing the degree of their intended effectiveness (Manke, 2003). The publication produced as a result of that study focused primarily on the degree to which the program met each intended goal. The publication did not address any statistical significance related to stated hypotheses.

Table 1.2 - MindOH! *Discipline Series:* **Short Term Goals**

Goal 1: Prepares students for a meaningful conversation with the school authority. Teaches a powerful communication tool and increases the amount of information students are willing to communicate to authorities, which may result in more effective administrator intervention.

Goal 2: Provides a mechanism for students to "calm down" emotionally as emotional control is the key to speaking rationally about an incident, listening, and thinking critically. Helps the student develop effective coping strategies and enhances stress management.

Goal 3: Assists students in reducing resistance to accepting responsibility for their choices and actions. Encourages the student to make amends for the infraction.

Goal 4: Teaches better conflict resolution strategies and problem-solving techniques.

Goal 5: Helps identify students at risk for more serious problems. Modules help identify students who have other problems in their lives or who may be likely to cause harm to themselves or others.

Goal 6: Assists in the identification of disciplinary infraction trends on school campuses

Evaluating Alternative Schools

Evaluation of initiatives housed within alternative schools can be problematic. While the innovative characteristics of an alternative school intensify the need for evaluation, they may also render the evaluation design especially challenging (Dunn, 1997). The unique characteristics of alternative schools are not easily detected using traditional tools and methods (Dunn, 1997). This difficulty in evaluation of alternative schools is found in the reasons students are referred to alternative school placements.

Traditional school evaluation consistently focuses on two key components of educational programs: student achievement, most often measured by scores on standardized achievement tests such as the ACT (Conrath, 2001; Dunn, 1997); and, graduation rates,

measured by number of students graduating with their kindergarten cohort group (Lehr, 2003). While these tools of evaluation may serve as effective methods for evaluating traditional schools, they lack the necessary data to successfully understand the positive impacts of alternative school programs. For example, many students graduating from an alternative school program complete their course work during a fifth year of high school. Although they graduate with a diploma, they are not counted in the school's graduating rate because they did not complete high school with their cohort group.

Students attending alternative school programs often do so because of social-emotional issues or problems stemming from the home. In addition, students suffering from such external school issues often turn to drugs and/or sex for solace (Lickona, 1993). As a result, teen pregnancy and police matters become concerns, and these students may fall well behind their traditional school counterparts in learning. Still, alternative schools can help many of these young people overcome their debilitating situations (Conrath, 2001).

As alternative school programs work diligently to address these matters, they are forced to resolve two conflicts simultaneously, student achievement and social-emotional issues. Thus, particular concern is given to the use of standardized test scores as the sole or primary indicator of an alternative school's success (Dunn, 1997). Reliance on such tests is not likely to yield enough data about an alternative school's program and its positive effect on its students (Dunn, 1997).

Review of Literature

In reviewing the literature, the following individual areas are examined: Punishment and Behavior Modification; At-Risk Student Behavior; Alternative Schools; and Character Education. As stated previously, it is estimated that half of all classroom time is spent on

activities other than instruction (Manke, 2005). In response to this growing concern, public

school districts have begun investigating a variety of approaches to enhance school climate,

time on task, and consequently, academic achievement. Alternative schools and character

education programs have become two such approaches for developing positive student

behaviors and enhancing school climate. Still, despite an increasing interest in character

education and alternative schools among policy makers and education professionals, many

school districts hesitate to do anything that might detract from their focus on increasing

academic performance (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006).

Punishment and Behavior Modification

Except when physically restrained, a person is least free when he is under the threat

of punishment (Skinner, 1971). Still, punishment systems remain a popular form for school

discipline programs. The problem with punishment systems is that they focus on removing

unwanted behaviors through fear without replacing the inappropriate behavior with an

appropriate one (Goodman, 2006). While it is true that some behaviors require an immediate

remedy, decreasing an event does not always mean that the behavior will be replaced with a

desirable one (Ormrod, 2003). Still, schools are faced with the ever-increasing challenge of

eliminating, or reducing, undesirable behaviors in students – those that interfere with the

students' own learning or the learning of their classmates (Ormrod, 2003). As such, many

schools incorporate behavior modification techniques into their daily routine.

Behavior modification approaches make one basic assumption: people's behaviors

are largely the result of experiences with environmental stimuli (Ormrod, 2003; Skinner,

1971). Skinner referred to these phenomena as *conditioning* (1971). Yet, school discipline

programs fail to implement a behavior modification program to the fullest extent (See table

1.3) when seeking to eliminate the problem behavior. School discipline programs seek to

decrease and eliminate undesirable behaviors through conditioning programs based upon

punishment but fail to equip the student with a more appropriate response (Ormrod, 2003).

As such, extrinsic motivators, such as loss of recess, rather than intrinsic motivators, impact

student classroom behavior more readily and fail to eliminate student problem behavior.

Table 1.3 - Behavior Modification Approach to Eliminating Problem Behavior

1.	Cue student when inappropriate behavior is observed
2.	Reinforce behaviors that are incompatible with undesirable behaviors
3.	Do not inadvertently reinforce undesirable behaviors
4.	When an inappropriate behavior occurs, teach an appropriate alternative
5.	Describe both inappropriate and appropriate behaviors concretely

Many early behaviorists believed that punishment was a relatively ineffective means

for changing behavior (Ormrod, 2003). However, more recently, behaviorists have found

that some forms of punishment (See Table 1.4) can be quite effective in reducing problem

behaviors (Ormrod, 2003). Still, the problem for school discipline programs is found in the

fact that most codes of conduct fail to teach appropriate alternatives to problem behaviors.

Table 1.4 – Sampling of Forms of Punishment

Verbal Reprimand – most students find scolding to be unpleasant

Response Cost – Some teachers remove a reward given for an earlier appropriate behavior

Logical consequences – a punishment that fits the crime (e.g. if a student breaks something, they must pay for the replacement)

Time-out – Placing a student in a dull or boring situation

In School Suspension – similar to time-out except it often lasts one or more days

There are many indicators that suggest America's youth continue to struggle with school failure and problem behavior (Miller, Fitch, & Marshall, 2003). Yet student problem behavior numbers are on the rise (National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2001). In response, schools have developed codes of conduct for student discipline in an effort to make expectations clear and thereby help prevent problem behavior. The purpose of these discipline codes is to codify the required action by the school authority, toward a student, after the student's behavior disrupts the ongoing educational activity or breaks a pre-established rule created by a teacher, school administrator, or board of education (Goodman, 2006). Most students are knowledgeable about the prohibitions in these codes and have internalized what they are not supposed to do even if they may be engaged in the prohibited behavior (Vincent, 2005). The problem is, "knowing what we're not supposed to do does not necessarily suggest we know what we are supposed to do" (Vincent, 2005, p.4). Yet teachers and principals consistently use rules and regulations as part of a punishment system to address student problem behaviors (Lapointe & Legault, 2004). Research on developing positive student behaviors demonstrates that programs that emphasize student self-discipline over external control through punitive responses to misbehavior show greater promise in improving school learning environments (Lapointe & Legault, 2004).

Student Behavior

Throughout history, education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good (Lickona, 1993). However, in today's society, these two overall goals have been reformed. The first has remained basically the same as that throughout history - to provide a climate for student learning and academic achievement. The second has changed. Today public education tends to focus more on fostering student

satisfaction with school (Brainard, 2001) than on reducing student problem behavior and

developing positive character traits. In response to this issue, schools are implementing

intervention programs specifically designed to redirect problem behavior (Miller et al.,

2003). One solution for helping students in developing positive behaviors is to involve them

in the decision-making process. When students believe that they have choices, they will be

more likely to make positive choices in behavior (Miller et al., 2003). Research supports the

idea that well articulated rules and procedures that are negotiated with students are a critical

aspect of developing positive student behavior while improving student academic

achievement (Marzano, 2003).

Literature regarding student behavior and productive school climates can be traced

back to the 1970's (Marzano, 2003). School climate research has demonstrated that effective

schools focus on the following four protective factors when considering the needs of at-risk

students and their behaviors (i.e., students in danger of educational failure, as indicated by

poor grades, disruptive behavior, repeated suspensions, or similar factors associated with

early withdrawal from school): safe and orderly environment (Aronson, 2001; Marzano,

2003); appropriate level of support (Deiro, 1996, 1997; Levine, & Lezotte, 1990; Marzano,

2003); high expectations (Levine, & Lezotte, 1990; Marzano, 2003); and focus on learning

(Levine, & Lezotte, 1990; Marzano, 2003).

When developing student-level protective factors as part of promoting a positive

school climate, researchers suggest that educators consider a number of rudimentary

concepts. According to Curwin (2005), when implementing positive behavior programs in

schools several basic principles need to be considered including: always treat students with

dignity; not doing ineffective things; model what you expect; being fair does not mean treat

everyone the same; and, rules must make sense (Curwin, 2005). In addition, student

engagement is a potentially useful construct for organizing strategies to support student

adjustment and achievement (Hudley, Daoud, Palanco, Wright-Castro, & Hershberg, 2003).

Throughout the twentieth century it has been demonstrated that education is more

than classroom learning. As such, the nation's current single-minded focus on linguistic and

mathematical learning is shortsighted, misguided and socially unjust (Cohen, 2005). Lack of

courtesy among children is a societal trend that, along with the troubling character of some

young people, and a lack of shared ethical values, should be of great concern (Lickona,

1993). No longer can education be restricted to the cognitive realm (Gardner, 1999). In an

effort to assist in this matter, legislators enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of

2001. NCLB not only asks schools to contribute to student academic performance but to

their character development as well (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn & Smith, 2006). Thus, the

purpose of schooling becomes two-fold: first, to improve students academically; and second,

to develop students of moral character (Benninga et al., 2006). For some students, alternative

programs outside of the traditional school setting may be necessary to achieve these

objectives.

Alternative Schools

Throughout the twentieth century, a wide variety of alternative school programs have

been attempted to meet the varied needs of individual students. In the 1930's, alternative

schools for high school students were tried in one form or another by progressive educators

(*A Brief History of Alternative Education,* n.d.). In some ways, the progressive schools

stemming from the Progressive Movement of the 1930's were similar to most contemporary

alternative schools (*A Brief History of Alternative Education,* n.d.). Much of this movement

was framed around the principles of John Dewey. In his work, *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey professed that his lab schools should focus on the student's needs rather than on covering the well-defined scope and sequence of curriculum (Delaney, 1999). Still, Dewey (1916) was very much committed to the idea of curriculum and believed that a teacher needed to follow a student's interest in order to lead a child into it. Similar to the Progressive Schools designed after the educational principles of John Dewey, current alternative schools referred to in this paper represent public schools of choice focused on the needs of students.

Alternative education has a history that can be traced more than seven decades in the United States. In fact, much of what is regarded as new or innovative in education has a long history (*A Brief History of Alternative Education,* n.d.). Still, more often, current alternative schools find their roots in the civil rights movement of the 1960's (*A Brief History of Alternative Education,* n.d.). These alternative schools were largely developed from a drive to create more innovative schools with a progressive orientation (Lehr, 2003). Over time, alternative school programs increased with the need to serve diverse populations of students; including those whose family's academic, social, political, or religious values diverged from the mainstream, as well as those who have been unsuccessful within the traditional school setting (NCES, 2001). Raywid (1994) notes that despite the multiplicity of forms of alternative education, two characteristics have been present from the start: "They have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and consequently they have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments" (p. 26).

While it is true that alternative school programs were created to provide an academic option for students lacking success in traditional education programs, many current alternative programs focus on redirecting student behaviors instead of meeting educational needs (Gregg, 1999). It was only in the 1980's that alternative schools became more conservative and remedial and began serving students who were more disruptive or failing in their home schools (Lehr, 2003). But, if alternative educators are to help at-risk students obtain a quality education, they must demonstrate that the agenda of alternative schools is consistent with the ideology of public education (Conrath, 2001). Thus, by meeting the needs, both educational and social, of at-risk students, alternative school programs can prove their need and value to their traditional school counterparts. In fact, alternative education could provide an invaluable example to regular schools also seeking to raise standards (Kraemer, & Ruzzi, 2001).

Research demonstrates that more students than ever are in need of nontraditional school settings in order to learn (Clair-Bolich, 2003). According to the NCES, during the 2000-2001 school year it was reported that almost 40 percent of school districts in the United States housed alternative school programs. Approximately one-third of the districts that had alternative school programs for at-risk students had at least one such program that did not have the capacity to enroll new students during the previous school year (NCES, 2001). Of those districts that had alternative programs, 18% had two or more schools (NCES, 2001). Also, it should be noted that many of the districts without programs were those with small enrollment size in rural areas and, as such, did not have sufficient need for such educational programs (NCES, 2001).

Alternative schools can be a source of help for these many young people in helping them overcome their most debilitating handicaps in school (Conrath, 2001). As such, alternative schools and programs for secondary at-risk students are becoming increasingly popular across the country (Saunders, & Saunders, 2002). Alternative schools can demonstrate to others that it is possible for all students to succeed (Conrath, 2001). Still, with increased pressure to leave no child behind, concerns continue to rise in school districts for students classified as at-risk.

While a common definition of alternative schools accepted by administrators, researchers and policymakers does not currently exist (Lehr, 2003), students are referred to as at-risk if they are in danger of educational failure, as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, suspension, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with early withdrawal from school (NCES, 2001). According to the National Education Goals Panel (1999), hundreds of thousands of students in the United States drop out of school each year without successfully completing high school. And although the nation's dropout rate is on the decline, demographic data collected in the 2000 Current Population Survey (CPS) demonstrate a significant dropout problem still exists today.

Since achieving a 90% high school completion rate in each of the 50 states was one of the eight national goals (NEGP, 1999), and according to the 1999 National Education Goals Report, only 17 states had achieved a 90% high school completion rate, the need to serve at-risk students with specialized programs has become a necessity.

Alternative schools are offering hope to communities across the nation. Thus, the news for alternative schools is good. Past research has documented the success of alternative schools and programs (Barr & Parrett, 1997; Saunders & Saunders, 2002). In particular,

researchers have found that students in alternative schools benefit from teachers and staff providing positive personal interaction that includes personal and social counseling, individualized learning plans using a variety of teaching and learning techniques, social skills development, and communication from teachers and staff of their genuine concern for students' well-being and academic progress (Saunders & Saunders, 2002). The overall perception of alternative schools is much more positive in programs where more focus is placed on academics than behavior management (Kallio & Padula, 2001). Still, alternative schools can become models for their traditional school counterparts if they are willing to take on the most urgent of neglected tasks in developing successful youths: teaching internal self-control (Conrath, 2001).

Across America, districts continue to seek new approaches for dealing with student problem behavior while raising student achievement. One possible approach by which alternative schools can demonstrate their value is to show the effectiveness of a quality character education program in addressing student problem behavior and the lack of interpersonal relationship skills often encountered when working with at-risk students, while at the same time supporting academic success.

Character Education

From the beginning of formal education, schools have shaped children's social, emotional and ethical lives as well as their cognitive development (Cohen, 2005). Teaching cultural values to students communicates society's expectations for behavior (McArthur, 2002). In essence, character education can be traced to the beginning of formal education as we know it.

According to Benninga et al. (2006), the term *character education* has historically referred to the duty of the older generation to form the character of the young through experiences affecting their attitudes, knowledge and behaviors. However, more recent definitions have come to include such developmental outcomes as a positive perception of school, emotional literacy, and social justice activism (Benninga et al., 2006). The problem remains that many character educators fail to offer a formal definition of character, making implementing character education a difficult task (Berkowitz, 1998). In addition, character education efforts are as diverse as the virtues that define them. Character education has been defined in terms of relationship virtues (e.g., respect, fairness, civility, tolerance), self-oriented virtues (e.g., fortitude self-discipline, effort, perseverance) or a combination of the two (Benninga et al., 2006).

Compounding the problem is that over time the role of public education in teaching cultural values diminished. More and more, young people are developing their understanding of cultural values through mass media and popular culture (Lickona, 2004). In addition, in the United States, as the economy began to shift from a focus on mass production to one of mass consumption, the psychological and ethical requirements placed on the individual began to change as well (Character Education Partnership (CEP), 2005). According to the CEP (2005), with growing abundance, more emphasis could be placed upon accumulation, leisure, and the cultivation of personal preferences than on a sense of community and cultural values.

In recent years, the numbers of public schools implementing character education programs have begun to grow. The growth of such programs can be demonstrated to coincide with two events: (1) the increasing numbers of people across the ideological

spectrum that believe our society is in deep moral trouble (Lickona, 1993); and, (2) the rise

of high stakes testing (Benninga et al., 2006). According to Benninga et al., "the No Child

Left Behind Act asks schools to contribute not only to students' academic performance but

also to their character" (p. 448). In addition, as society becomes more aware of the moral

crisis we face, the feeling grows that schools cannot be ethical bystanders (Lickona, 1993).

Still, though there is an increasing interest in character education among policy makers and

educational professionals, many schools hesitate to do anything that might detract from their

focus on increasing academic focus (Benninga et al., 2006). Yet, the premise for the

character education movement remains the same – the need to educate moral citizens

(Lickona, 2004).

One problem character education programs encounter is resistance from staff,

students, and communities to the development of new school programs (Elias, 2004). In

addition, administrative, organizational and logistical barriers, such as funding and training,

create roadblocks for the implementation of effective character education efforts (Elias,

2004). Still, teachers and administrators are encouraged to "conscientiously go about

creating a moral climate in our schools" (Benninga et al., 2006, p. 448).

In response to this dilemma, The CEP (2003), a national nonpartisan coalition

dedicated to helping K-12 schools and districts develop moral character and civic virtue in

young people, developed the *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education* (Lickona,

Schaps, & Lewis, 2004). The Eleven Principles were created to serve as criteria for schools

to use when developing a quality character education effort. The principles also serve to

facilitate a supportive environment in which students are encouraged to succeed. Likewise,

the premises of these principles overlap with research on school climate (e.g., Berkowitz,

personal communication, April 2005; Chambers, Hylen, Schreiber, & Asner-Self, 2005;

Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Marzano, 2003). In educational settings with a climate of support,

adults and students respect each other (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, &

Reddy, 2004).

Similar to findings in the school climate literature, character education initiatives

recognize that all students have needs for safety, belonging, and experience of contributing,

and they are more likely to internalize the values and expectations of groups that meet these

needs (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005a). Thus, one of the common strands in character education is

community (Berkowitz, Vincent, & McKay, 2002). An effective character education

initiative, therefore, creates a caring school community (CEP, 2003).

Past reports indicate that students long for care; further, they perceive that there is a

lack of caring in schools (Doyle & Doyle, 2003; Raywid & Oshiyama, 2000). While it is

true that schools care about the academic performance of their students, schools that are

caring communities go beyond the core academic content to address the psychological and

social well-being of their students (Doyle, & Doyle, 2003). According to the CEP (2003), a

school committed to character strives to become a microcosm of a civil, caring, and just

society. Similarly, Doyle and Doyle (2003) note that a "caring school community has an

ethic of care that works to develop students who will become empathetic adults and transport

a caring mission beyond the walls of the school into their communities" (p. 259).

Literature which stems from character education initiatives suggest that in a caring

school community, the daily life of classrooms and all other parts of the school environment

are imbued with a climate of concern and respect for others (Berkowitz, Vincent, & McKay,

2002; CEP, 2003). Students report more positive forms of motivation and academic

engagement when they perceive that their school implements learner-centered practices that involve caring (Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Saunders, & Saunders, 2002). Implicit in these findings is the idea that developing a strong sense of community, one built on support and caring, occurs for the students when stronger and more positive relationships are built with teachers, school staff, peers, and the community at-large (Berkowitz et al., 2002). Thus, schools that promote students' sense of community are more likely to facilitate positive student behavior.

Although the community at-large plays a valuable role in the character development of young people, the students' parents are the most influential in this regard (Berkowitz, 1998; CEP, 2003). Thus, in addition to developing caring school communities, schools that reach out to families, and include them in all aspects of educating a child, greatly enhance the student's chances for success (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005a; Chambers, Hylen, Schreiber, & Asner-Self, 2005). Schools that empower parents, as well as other community organizations, improve student learning.

Many character education programs understand that families and communities play a vital role in school based initiatives and student achievement (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005a). In caring school communities, parents are empowered in the process of educating their child when allowed to share in authority and decision-making in schools (Doyle, & Doyle, 2003). When parents are empowered in this manner, they become part of the solution and provide support for more than just their own students (Novick et al., 2002).

Interestingly, despite the rich history of character education (Berkowitz, Schaefer, & Bier, 2001) and the increased examination of student achievement (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 2000), research linking these two areas is extremely sparse (Chambers, Hylen, Schreiber, &

Asner-Self, 2005). After all, character education is intended to promote student character

development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005b). Still, the possible linkages between character

education and academic achievement warrant examination (Battistich, & Hom, 1997).

According to Berkowitz and Bier (2005a), recent findings show that good character

education supports and enhances the academic goal of schools: student achievement. In their

research, Berkowitz and Bier (2005b) reviewed 33 research-based programs in an effort to

uncover and synthesize existing data on the effects of K-12 character education. One

approach to their task was to observe the percentage of variables for a specific outcome

category for each program and determine the ones that were most consistently impacted

positively by the effort. What they found was that among the top ten outcomes most

consistently impacted positively by these character education initiatives were attachment to

school and academic achievement.

Research also suggests that social support from peers and family are an important

component of educating a child (Berkowitz, & Bier, 2005a; CEP, 2003, Lickona, 1991).

Studies examining parent, peer, and teacher relationships have revealed that supportive

relationships are associated with many positive school outcomes, including positive student

behavior and increased achievement (e.g., Benninga et al., 2006). Thus, a relationship

between character education programs, positive student behavior and student achievement

can be found.

Significance of the Study

Addressing student problem behavior through disciplinary techniques is a complex

matter. Historically, traditional methods of correcting problem behaviors in students have

proven largely ineffective in both traditional and alternative school programs (Goodman,

2006). Out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, after-school detentions and Saturday schools have lost any productive effect they may have had at one time (Greenberg, & Bumbarger, 1999). Consequently, a number of initiatives have been developed that address negative student behavior in an effort to reduce suspension and detention rates in schools. However, few programs have been designed that specifically use character education based efforts to teach students how to redirect their own behavior before disciplinary action is necessary.

The MindOH! *Discipline Series* is one of the few initiatives that combine student use of a character education based interactive program with principal interaction in an effort to reduce negative student behavior. A comprehensive study of the effectiveness of the program in traditional school settings has demonstrated a positive correlation between the implementation of the program and a reduction in repeat student problem behaviors (Manke, 2003). The study's significance is magnified when the possible effects the program may have on problem behavior of at-risk students attending an alternative school setting are taken into consideration. Moreover, the study's significance grows when the immense possibilities for the use of technology in the process of student discipline (e.g., the time advantages and the possibility of increasing student honesty) are considered. At present, there is little literature available about such issues.

Research is needed to determine the impact of such an effort. In particular, research examining the effectiveness of such an initiative in an alternative school setting is imperative due to the high disciplinary records and low achievement histories of students attending such programs. In sum, if alternative schools are to be successful in addressing student problem behavior, then research needs to be conducted on current programs and their effectiveness.

As such, this paper investigates two key research questions. First, does the use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school correlate with a reduction in the number of subsequent discipline referrals of a student as compared to the school's traditional approach to discipline? And, second, what is the impact of reducing student disciplinary offenses on student academic achievement?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a greater reduction in the number of subsequent discipline referrals of a student than the school's traditional approach to discipline.

Hypothesis 2: The use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a greater increase in the GPA of a student than the school's traditional approach to discipline.

Hypothesis 3: There is a direct relationship between a reduction in suspension days as a result of disciplinary referrals and increased student academic achievement.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

For the purpose of this study, a randomized control design was utilized. This approach, using randomization to establish a control group and treatment group, was chosen to assist in avoiding any effects of selection bias in the study. According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), random assignment is the optimal procedure for establishing equivalence of groups on both measured and unmeasured characteristics that may be associated with outcomes. Thus, any post-intervention differences between groups in outcomes can be attributed to exposure to the intervention.

The primary threat to demonstrating causal effects of treatment in the study is selection bias by administrators overseeing the disciplinary process. If left to administrator discretion, it is quite possible that only those students who administrators believed would be more amenable to sitting and using the MindOH! *Discipline Series* modules would be assigned to receive the program. It is also quite possible that administrators would specifically assign only those students to the MindOH! *Discipline Series* intervention who they believe need the "cool down" time that comes as a result of working through the process. Use of a random assignment procedure eliminates the possibility that such selection factors could plausibly account for any observed differences in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups.

Several methods for randomly assigning students to the treatment and control groups exist. For the purpose of this study all students attending the alternative school within either year of the study were randomly assigned to one of the groups prior to the beginning of the

study. Although all students were assigned to one of the groups, it was understood that not all students would be referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. As such, a list was generated through the Human Development Department located at California State University – Long Beach (CSULB) that detailed whether or not a student was to use the MindOH! modules or partake in the standard disciplinary process if and when they were sent to the office for a discipline infraction. This process was completed electronically by emailing a list of all students enrolled in the school to CSULB prior to each school year for randomization. A list detailing the randomized placement of each student was then sent back to the school for implementation.

The purpose for randomly assigning students to the treatment and control group prior to committing discipline infractions was two-fold. The first was to avoid selection bias described above while assisting administrators during the disciplinary process by not having to worry about assigning a student to one of the two groups. The second was to increase the probability that administrators will follow the same protocol each time an individual is referred to the office. It was realized that some students would commit more than one disciplinary infraction over the course of the school year. Randomizing student placement prior to the beginning of the study allowed for consistency in the implementation process. That is, students who use the MindOH! modules who are sent to the office the first time they commit a discipline infraction would use the modules on all subsequent referrals.

This study proposes to compare two strategies for addressing student problem behavior in at-risk students attending an alternative school setting. The first intervention strategy was used to address problem behaviors of students assigned to the treatment group. This strategy used a computer-based interactive discipline program developed by the

MindOH! Corporation. This program, entitled "Discipline and Life Skills Series" was developed to reduce discipline problems by instilling in students' a respect for themselves and others, and their responsibility for their emotions and their behavior (Manke, 2005).

The second intervention strategy was used to address problem behaviors of students assigned to the control group. This strategy was consistent with the traditional discipline techniques (e.g., out-of-school suspension, detention) that are used by administrators when addressing students that have been referred to the principal's office for disruptive behaviors. This strategy included one modification to the traditional process that is necessary for research purposes. Specifically, students referred to the principal's office were asked to immediately complete a short questionnaire and, after a short time-out period, were asked to complete the questionnaire a second time. The exact purpose of this modification will be discussed below.

Subjects

The subjects for the study consisted of secondary students attending an alternative high school in a large 18,000 student suburban school district located in Missouri. During the first school year of the study (2004 – 2005), 110 students were enrolled in the school (41 female, 69 male). The racial background of these students was as follows: 1% Native American, 1% Asian/ Pacific Islander, 1% Hispanic, 3% African American, 1% other and 93% Caucasian. During the second school year of the study (2005 – 2006), 119 students were enrolled in the school (48 female, 77 male). The racial background of these students was as follows: 1% Native American, 1% Asian/ Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic, 6% African American, 1% other and 88% Caucasian.

During the first year of the study 97 students (88%) had consent to participate in the study. Students participating in the study ranged in grades from sophomore to senior with 48 students (49%) in their senior year, 43 students (44%) in their junior year and 6 students (7%) in their sophomore year (Table 3.1). In addition, 60 (61%) were male and 37 (39%) were female.

During the second year of the study 90 students (76%) participated in the study with 55 students (61%) in their senior year, 34 students (38%) in their junior year and 1 student (1%) in their sophomore year (Table 3.1). In addition, 56 (62%) were male and 34 (38%) were female. Forty-nine students (19 female, 30 male) were enrolled in the school during both years of the study.

Table 3.1 - Year in School of Study Participants

Grade	Year in study	Frequency	Percent
Sophomore	04-05	6	7%
	05-06	1	1%
Junior	04-05	43	44%
	05-06	34	38%
Senior	04-05	48	49%
	05-06	55	61%
Total	04-05	97	100%
	05-06	90	100%

When a student was referred to the principal the appropriate intervention was applied depending upon placement in the treatment group or control group through the randomization processed described previously. Since not all students assigned to a particular group were referred to the principal for disciplinary reasons, the sampling size of the two groups was

unequal. In addition, not all students attending the school obtained consent to participate in

the study. Table 3.2 displays the two year breakdown of population numbers according to

student assignment in the treatment and control groups or neither.

Table 3.2 - Group Assignment per Year

Treatment	School Year	Number	Percent
Control	04-05	46	42%
	05-06	40	34%
MindOH!	04-05	51	46%
	05-06	50	42%
Neither	04-05	13	12%
	05-06	29	24%
Total	04-05	110	100%
	05-06	119	100%

Treatments

The independent variable in this study is the disciplinary intervention treatment

applied to the student**.** As stated previously, this study incorporated two intervention

strategies. The first intervention strategy incorporated the use of the MindOH! *Discipline*

Series web-based computer program. This program is designed to assist the principal in the

disciplinary process and includes a component for gathering information for the purpose of

statistical analysis. It consists of three discipline modules. Students assigned to the

treatment group who were referred to the office for disciplinary action, were assigned to

complete the three discipline modules (See Appendix B for The 4 Step Process).

A specific location for the computers was set up in the school where all research

students were assigned when asked to complete the MindOH! *Discipline Series modules.*

This was done to ensure on-task behavior. Students assigned to the program completed a

series of open-ended questions focusing on the student's emotions and thoughts at the time of

the infraction. Opportunities for reflection, critical thinking, writing, and positive action were

provided. All typed responses were deleted from the computer after a print-out of those

responses had been confirmed to protect the student's confidentiality. Only the principal or

assistant principal at the school, with whom the student met, and researchers had access to

the student's printed report.

There were several dependent variables of interest in this study: behavior problem

repetition; number of suspension days; and academic achievement. All dependent variables

are easily measured using standard school report forms for reporting disciplinary data to the

State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The academic

achievement variable included semester and cumulative grade point averages gathered from

individual student semester report cards.

One obstacle in the data collection process was due to The MindOH! Assistant

Principal module having a built-in data collection system for tracking student emotions

during the survey process. A review of literature revealed no instruments that have been

designed to track student emotion for students referred to the office for problem behaviors.

Due to a lack of an appropriate data collection instrument, Dr. Beth Manke, in conjunction

with the MindOH! Company, developed a survey tool for intervention and control purposes.

The survey instrument, developed for the control group, was designed to measure the level of

intensity of emotion the student was experiencing shortly after being referred to the

principal's office and after a 20-minute period of quiet time in the same office.

In addition to the control group surveys, DESE reports and the MindOH! *Discipline*

Series modules, data were gathered using discipline referral slips which were already in use

at the alternative high school, district suspension data reports, individual student report cards and individual student transcripts. DESE and district suspension reports include data about student discipline based upon types of violations and resultant number of out of school suspension days. Similarly, the MindOH! *Discipline Series* report provided specific infraction data but did not include number of days of suspension as a result of the offense. In contrast, however, the MindOH! *Discipline Series* data did specify the number of students repeating offenses for which they were referred to the office. Student report cards and transcripts also were used to assist in evaluating the possible impact of the intervention on student achievement and attendance.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began in August of 2004 and was completed in May of 2006. On August 9, 2004, an explanation of the study the school would be participating in was presented to parents and students. This presentation was made during an open house for families enrolled in the alternative school program. At that time, the consent to participate forms (Appendix C) were reviewed and given to parents and students eligible for the study. Families not attending the student orientation were invited by email and newsletter to obtain one from the school office. Consent forms were also provided to families who had not previously responded to packets mailed home at the mid-quarter parent/teacher meetings. This procedure was followed again during the January of 2005, August of 2005 and January of 2006 new student orientations to allow for new enrollees to participate in the study. Students returning to the school the second year of the study were not required to complete a new consent form. All students participating in the study were required to obtain, or give, consent. Students 17 years of age or younger were required to obtain the consent of their

parents or guardians. Students who were 18 years of age or older at the time of the study were able to give consent of their own accord.

Students in both the control group and treatment group were referred to the principal's office for disciplinary action based upon a specific violation of the school's disciplinary code, such as a heated argument between students. Upon arriving at the office of the principal, the first course of action was based on the student's assignment to the treatment or control group. A student assigned to the treatment group who was sent to the office was first asked to complete the MindOH! computer module *What's Up?: Student Incident Report.* This first module's predominant focus is on deescalating student emotion at the moment of the infraction. The purpose of this design was to help the student describe the incident which brought him or her to the office and his or her emotional state at the moment of the infraction. The key to the effectiveness of this module was the ability of the student to feel uninhibited in expressing himself or herself openly and honestly about his or her emotion and feelings at the time of the incident. To begin, the student input his or her student identification number and an infraction code (Appendix D) provided by the assistant principal or principal. The student was then led through a reporting process according to a model entitled "Five Levels of Clear Communication." Students' level of emotional distress, sense of responsibility, and their recommendations for appropriate consequences are assessed.

Upon completion of this module, a printout of the student's responses was provided to one of the school administrators (See Appendix E for sample). The administrator met with the student about the infraction and the student's responses. The response sheet was used by the administrator as a communication tool with the student to assess the level of

understanding the student had regarding the severity of the issue and the level to which the

student had taken responsibility for his or her actions. In addition, the school administrator

was provided recommendations, by the MindOH! *Discipline Series* program, for on-line

follow-up modules for the student to complete. The follow-up modules include *Rule 1:*

Respect and *Taking Charge: Responsibility*. Each module guides the student through an

interactive process which focuses on the meaning of the particular character trait, the

rationale for embracing that value, and the positive results of its application. The actual

amount of completion time depends upon what the student includes in his or her response.

These modules could be completed after a student had met with a school administrator.

These follow-up modules also include reflection and activity sheets that address an inclusive

list of specific misbehaviors such as tardiness, bullying, and cheating.

Students in the control group did not have access to the MindOH! Discipline Series.

Instead, these students participated in the typical disciplinary procedures with one

modification. Students in the control group, upon entering the office were asked to complete

a short survey (Manke, 2004) where they rated their level of emotional distress and indicated

whether or not they were at fault. The student was then left alone for 20 minutes before being

asked to complete a second survey similar to the first. The purpose of these questions and the

wait time was to generate comparable data from the control and treatment groups.

Disciplinary action was then assigned to these students as is traditional in secondary schools.

Traditional actions taken by administrators include, but are not limited to, after-school

detention, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and Saturday school.

Two major differences exist between the two interventions. First, while students in

both groups were given time to think about their emotions at the time of a particular

infraction for which the student was referred to the office, the student assigned to the treatment group was led through a reflection exercise while the student in the control group was not given any direction during the 20 minute wait period. Second, the student in the treatment group was given time to share his or her emotions afterwards with an administrator who had been trained in conducting post-MindOH! module meetings. Students in the control group had no specific follow-up from the administrator regarding their level of emotional distress regarding the infraction.

For the MindOH! *Discipline Series*, data on the number and frequency of infractions, overall and time-selected module usage, and each individual student's history are all accessible online (See Appendix F for sample of a school report) (Manke, 2005). Only researchers and administrators assigned a specific user name and password had access to student data. This access allows researchers to test hypotheses that the discipline module positively impacts student skills and behaviors including academic achievement.

Variables

In Hypothesis 1, the dependent variable is the number of subsequent disciplinary offenses by an individual student, as measured by the number of office referrals for students in the control group and number of times a student used the MindOH! Discipline Series for students in the treatment group. The independent variable is the treatment applied to the student.

In Hypothesis 2, the dependent variable is student academic achievement as measured by the semester grade point averages (GPA) of the students. Individual student GPAs at the end of each school year in which they participate in the study will be compared against the students' grade point average from the end of the previous school year. In addition, change in

GPA over two years will be evaluated for students participating in the study both years.

Again, the independent variable is the treatment group applied to the student.

In Hypothesis 3, the independent variable is again student academic achievement as

measured by the semester grade point averages (GPA) of the students. The independent

variable is student recidivism.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions in this study, a number of statistical tests were

utilized. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences (Norusis, 2002) on a personal computer at the University of Missouri – St. Louis.

In order to characterize the data and test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics were generated.

The descriptive statistics were used to assist in describing and summarizing the data and

provide a better understanding of the distribution of the variables.

For the purpose of testing the first hypotheses, the number of subsequent infractions

by students in each of the two groupings was compared using a two-tailed *t*-test. As stated

previously, a *t*-test was used to determine if the comparative means between the two groups

was significantly different. Similarly, a two-tailed *t*-test was used to test the second

hypothesis for the purpose of determining if there was a statistically significant change in

GPA between the students in the control and treatment groups. For the purpose of testing the

third hypothesis, which focused on recidivism of student problem behaviors and the effect on

individual student academic achievement, a bivariate analysis was conducted using a Pearson

correlation calculation between change in GPA and recidivism for both sample groups.

Table 2.1 is a graphic summary of the hypotheses, variables and statistical analysis for this

study.

Table 2.1 Research Hypothesis and Analysis

HYPOTHESIS	VARIABLES	ANALYSIS
#1: The use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a reduction in the number of subsequent discipline referrals of a student as compared to the school's traditional approach to discipline.	Dependent Variable: Number of office referrals subsequent to the original offense (N_RPTS) Independent Variable: Treatment group	Independent measure *t*-test
#2: The use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a greater increase in the GPA of a student than the school's traditional approach to discipline.	Dependent Variable: Student semester grade point average (GPA) Independent Variable: Treatment group	Independent measure *t*-test
#3: There is a direct relationship between a reduction in repeat disciplinary offenses and increased student academic achievement.	Dependent Variable: Student semester grade point average (GPA) Independent Variable: Student Recidivism	Pearson correlation calculation

CHAPTER 3

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data were collected from three sources: (a) the MindOH! Administrative Database

program (MindOH! L.L.C., 2001) to measure recidivism of students in the treatment group;

(b) the Discipline and Incidents Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports

for the 2004 – 2005 and 2005 – 2006 school years to measure recidivism and level of

offense; and (c) the GPA History for Specific Student ID report (courtesy of the consenting

school district, October 15, 2007) to assess academic improvement. To evaluate the data

both descriptive statistics and *t-tests* were used. Descriptive data were used as an initial

analysis tool to evaluate frequencies and mean differences between the control group and

treatment group regarding recidivism and academic achievement. Mean change in GPA was

measured to evaluate academic achievement.

Results

Recidivism Data

Data from the MindOH! Administrative Database and the Discipline and Incidents

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports were analyzed using descriptive

statistics calculated with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Norusis, 2002).

Both the data from the MindOH! Administrative Database and the Discipline and Incidents

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports were used to determine number

of office referrals per student in each group, type of offense and disciplinary action

administered per offense. Of particular interest was the number of subsequent office referrals

per student and the corresponding means and frequencies for each intervention strategy over

a one-year period. These results are set out in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

Table 3.1 – Recidivism Means/Frequencies One Year Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean # of Subsequent Referrals
Control	31	1.00
MindOh!	54	1.02

Table 3.2 – Recidivism Frequency

Number of subsequent referrals per individual	MindOH! Group Frequencies	Control Group Frequencies
0	25	17
1	15	6
2	8	3
3	3	3
4	1	1
5	1	0
6	1	1
Total number of repeat referrals (summation of # of referrals per individual minus the number of students with zero repeats)	55	31
Mean Number of Subsequent Referrals (Total number of repeat referrals divided by N)	55/54 = 1.02	31/31 = 1.00

For the purpose of testing the first hypothesis, the numbers of repeat offenses within each grouping were compared using *t*-tests. As stated previously, the *t*-test was used to determine if the difference in mean infractions between the two groups was statistically significant. The *t*-test was run specifically on the number of subsequent offenses per student. The findings reveal that there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing recidivism (t = -.059, df = 83, p = .504).

To further test the initial hypothesis, a secondary analysis of data was performed. This time the *t*-test was run using only the data on number of subsequent offenses for students enrolled in the study for two years. As in the previous case, the findings reveal that

there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing recidivism. The results are described in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 – Recidivism *t*-test Two Year Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
MindOH! Group	18	1.36	-1.309	36	0.09
Control Group	22	2.05			

Further investigation was necessary to determine if the computer based interactive discipline program developed by MindOH! L.L.C. had any positive effect on student misbehavior. To investigate the possibility that the MindOH! *Discipline Series* may still have a positive impact on student misbehavior three new variables were developed. Of interest was whether or not one particular approach to discipline lead to less out-of-school suspension days than the other. The three variables were as follows: number of suspension days for all students participating in the study at least one school year (OSSyr1); number of suspension days during the second year of the study for all students participating both school years (OSSyr2); and, total number of suspension days of students participating in the study both years of the study. Again, *t*-tests were used to evaluate the three sets of data. The results of the *t*-test are described in Table 3.4. As was the case with the recidivism data, there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing student suspension days.

Table 3.4 – Suspension *t*-test Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
OSS Days Year 1				
Control Group	31	2.19	82	.881
MindOH! Group	54	2.36		
OSS Days Year 2				
Control Group	22	2.59	38	.903
MindOH! Group	18	2.78		
OSS Days both years				
Control Group	20	4.75	36	.967
MindOH! Group	18	4.67		

Academic Achievement Data

For the purpose of testing the second hypothesis, regarding the impact of the use of

the MindOH! program on academic achievement, data from the Discipline and Incidents

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports along with GPA data gathered

through the transcripts of students involved in the study were analyzed using descriptive

statistics calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Norusis, 2002). Of

particular interest were the corresponding means for change in GPA for each intervention

strategy over a one-year and two-year period (see Table 3.5). It should be noted that the

GPA data of one student assigned to the MindOH! treatment group was not available. As

such, there is a difference in the N between the recidivism data and the academic

achievement data for this group.

An initial review of the data in Table 3.5 revealed that there was a difference in mean

GPA increase between the control group (one year mean = .301, two year mean = .468) and

the MindOH! group (one year mean = .375, two year mean = .650). To evaluate if this

difference was statistically significant or not, the change in GPAs within each grouping (one

year and two year) were compared using t – tests. These results of these tests are set out in

Table 3.6. The findings reveal that there was no statistically significant difference between

the two discipline approaches in improving GPA over a one or two-year period.

Table 3.5 – GPA Mean Changes

Group	N	Mean Change
One Year		
Control	31	.301
MindOh!	53	.375
Two Year		
Control	22	.468
MindOh!	18	.650

Table 3.6 – Independent Samples Test for Variances in GPA

Variable	t	df	Sig.
Change in GPA – One Year	-1.225	80	.112
Change in GPA – Two Year	-.935	53	.343

Recidivism and Academic Achievement Correlation Data

The third hypothesis addressed the question, "is there a correlation between GPA and

number of repeat offenses?" As stated previously, a bivariate analysis using a Pearson

correlation calculation between change in GPA and recidivism for both the one-year and the

two-year sample groups was conducted to complete this investigation. The purpose of this

analysis was to determine if there was a correlation between change in GPA and number of

repeat offenses.   These results are described in Table 3.7. These findings revealed that there

was no statistically significant correlation between change in GPA and number of repeat

offenses.

Table 3.7 – Academic Means/Frequencies

Years in study	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
One Year	84	-.18	.215
Two Year	40	-.23	.314

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This chapter describes the results of quantitative data collected and analyzed to test two hypotheses related to the use of the MindOH! L.L.C. interactive web-based character education program in reducing student problem behavior and the corresponding effect on academic achievement.   The first hypothesis stated that the use of the character education based MindOH! L.L.C. interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a reduction in the number of subsequent discipline referrals of a student as compared to the school's traditional approach to discipline. The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing recidivism.

A second analysis was conducted to further investigate the possibility that the MindOH! *Discipline Series* may still have a positive impact on student misbehavior. Again, the data revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing student suspension days. The first hypothesis was not supported.

The second hypothesis stated that the use of the character education based MindOH! interactive discipline program in an alternative school will be associated with a greater increase in the GPA of a student than the school's traditional approach to discipline. An initial review of the descriptive statistics between the control group and the MindOH! Treatment group over a one-year period and two-year period revealed that there was a difference in mean GPA increase between the control group and the MindOH! group.

Results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in raising student GPAs. The second hypothesis was also not supported.

The third hypothesis stated there is a direct relationship between a reduction in number of repeat office referrals and increased student academic achievement. A Pearson correlation calculation between change in GPA and recidivism revealed there was no statistically significant correlation between change in GPA and recidivism. The third hypothesis was not supported as well.

Discussion

This study examined the impact of a web-based character education initiative on student problem behavior and academic achievement. No statistically significant effects were observed. Still, an expansion of the use of character education initiatives to improve student problem behavior is needed. Providing high school students with multiple character development opportunities, especially at-risk students attending an alternative school program, can prove to be effective in reducing student problem behavior. The research literature supports this claim.

Improvements in the application of the program may also prove beneficial. While quantitative data did not reflect a statistically significant difference in outcomes between the two study groups, conversations with staff and students suggest the program served as an outlet for dialogue between students and administration during the discipline process. Students and staff felt that the open and honest dialogue that occurred as part of the process provided two beneficial outcomes: first, students felt their voices were heard, giving them a sense of connection with the school; and, second, administrators felt they got a better

understanding of why a student reacted in a specific manner, leading to a possible solution to the problem.

In addition, there may be hidden benefits to the application of a character education based discipline program in an alternative school. For example, one administrator in this study reported that through the use of the MindOH! *What's Up Student Incident Report module,* the school discovered that one female student had recently learned she was pregnant. Understanding this, the school was able to put into place emotional supports for the student. In another case, again through the use of the MindOH! *What's Up Student Incident Report* module, administrators in the school were able to use the responses of a male student to put behavior supports in place for the student to deescalate emotionally prior to violent outbursts.

Several limitations to this study should be addressed. First, the process by which students were randomized may have had an impact on the study. Students were randomized prior to the beginning of the study. All students attending the school were placed into one of the groupings. Because not all students obtained consent to participate, and the randomization was based on the assumption that all would, an ill effect of this action was that the two grouping sizes were imbalanced prior to the implementation of the study. In addition, not all students in an assigned group were referred to the principal's office for disciplinary reasons. Students attending the school for credit recovery purposes related to illness or high absenteeism unrelated to student problem behaviors further effected sample size and may have skewed the discipline as well as the GPA data.

A more beneficial approach to the randomization process may have been to place students, who had consent to participate, alternately into an assigned group as they were referred to the principal's office. For example, the first student referred to the office that year

would be placed in the treatment group. The second student would then be placed into the control group, and so forth. As such, the two research groupings would have been of similar sizes.

Second, the MindOH! *Discipline Series module* treatment was difficult to implement in every circumstance. Due to the nature of dealing with certain student problem behaviors, the consistent implementation of the MindOH! *Discipline Series* program may have been somewhat difficult. For example, if a student were in a serious physical altercation, there may not have been an opportunity for the student to participate in the MindOH! *Discipline Series module.* Students in this situation, as well as those caught in violation of the school's drug policy, most often were escorted off the school premises by a law enforcement official prior to being allowed to complete the MindOH! *Discipline Series module.* As such, students would only have been assigned to the complete the *Discipline Series module* if and when they were allowed to return. Often this would have been five to ten days after the event occurred.

Finally, not all students chose to participate in the research. A number of students elected to not participate in the study. Some of these students were referred to the office on multiple occasions and received the traditional approach to discipline. Unfortunately, these data had to be excluded from the study.

Conclusions

This study was embarked upon to answer questions around the impact of a character education based interactive discipline program on at-risk student behavior in an alternative school. Specifically, the study evaluated the use of the MindOH! *Discipline Series* program in reducing recidivism of student problem behaviors in an alternative school and its impact

on student achievement. Although all three hypotheses were not supported by the study, an analysis of the data demonstrated that the impact of the program on academic achievement approached significance. This was also demonstrated in the recidivism data over a two year period.

In interacting with staff and students, this researcher discovered an overall satisfaction with the use of the program as part of the disciplinary process. Students found the program to be beneficial as a tool for reflecting and deescalating. Administrators found the program to be beneficial in opening doors for an open and honest dialogue leading to a better understanding of the reason for the misbehavior. Subsequently, these dialogues lead to expanded efforts for redirecting student problem behavior.

The findings of these conversations support the research literature demonstrating that supportive relationships between staff and students are associated with many positive school outcomes, including positive student behavior and increased achievement (e.g., Benninga et al., 2006). In addition, the results of this study suggest that the implementation of a character education based interactive discipline program may be associated with improved academic achievement among at-risk students attending an alternative school program. It also suggests that a relationship between character education programs and student achievement may be found when the program is sustained over a longer period of time and impacts a large number of students. If one examines the implementation of the MindOH! *Discipline Series* in an alternative school setting, particular attention should be focused on this environment and the impact the program could have on student problem behavior if the classroom character education instructional modules had also been implemented.

Research Implications

Further investigation into the impact of a character education based interactive discipline program on at-risk student behavior in an alternative school should be conducted. A replication of this study in multiple alternative school settings would provide additional information regarding research-based best practices for at-risk students. In addition, the nature of this study could be enhanced when implemented in combination with a comprehensive character education program design and the use of alternative disciplinary actions (i.e smoking cessation and anger management programs versus detention and suspension). This type of research would investigate the relationship between comprehensive character education programs, alternative disciplinary actions and positive student behavior.

Final Considerations

The focus of this study was on the impact of a character education based interactive discipline program on at-risk student behavior in an alternative school. The following conclusions were made:

1. There was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing recidivism.

2. There was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in reducing student suspension days.

3. There was no statistically significant difference between the two discipline approaches in raising student GPAs when comparing students involved in the study for one-year or students involved in the study for two years. However, the difference approached significance for the MindOH! Treatment group

over a two-year period. Findings suggested that a larger sampling size of

students who participated in the study, or a longer period of time may result in

a statistically significant difference.

4.   There was no statistically significant correlation between change in GPA and

recidivism.

Still, it appears beneficial for alternative schools to investigate the potential long-term

benefits of a quality character education program which includes an interactive discipline

program for at-risk student problem behavior.

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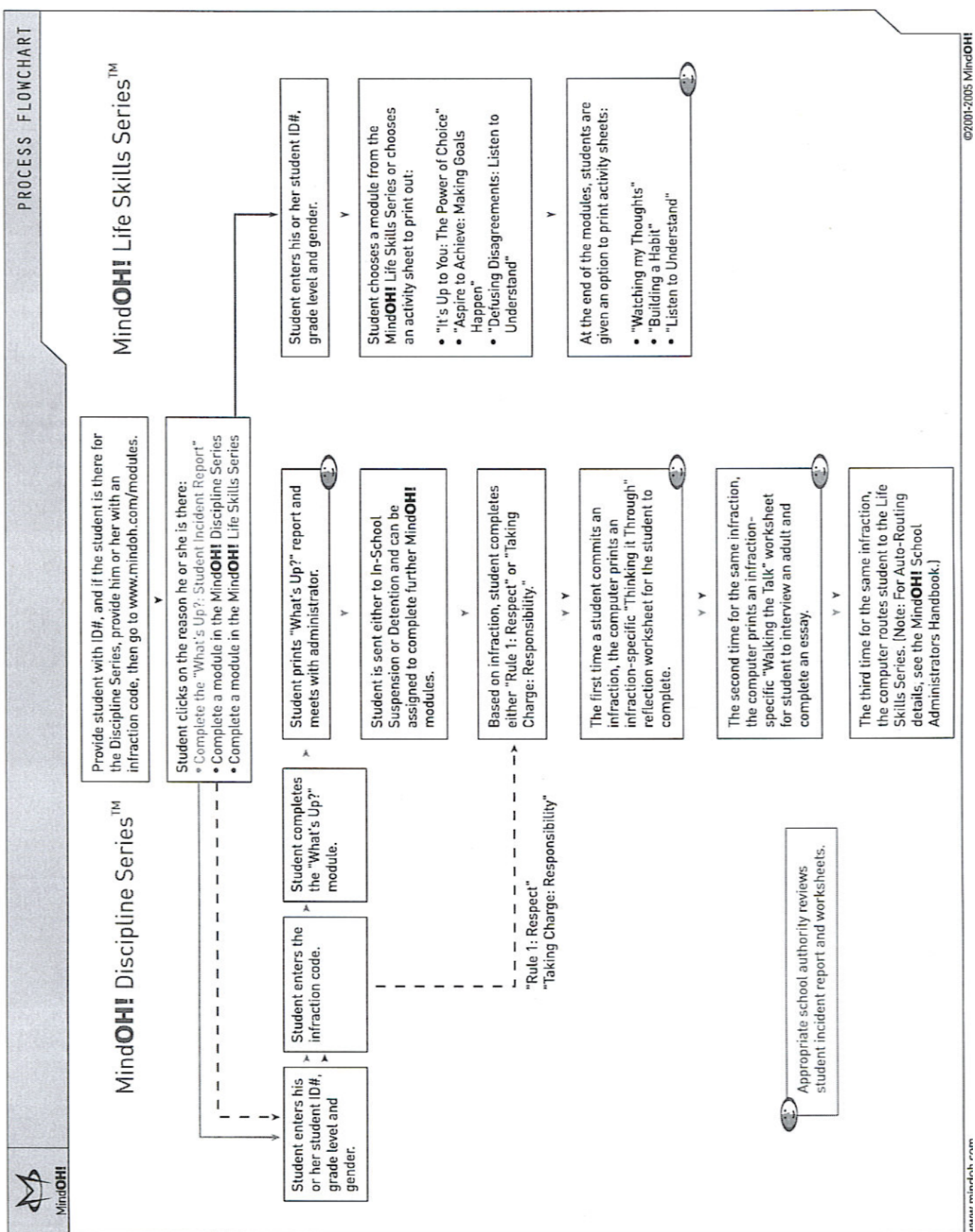*judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

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APPENDIX A

MINDOH! PROCESS FLOW CHART

PROCESS FLOWCHART

MindOH!

MindOH! Discipline Series™

Student enters his or her student ID#, grade level and gender.

Student enters the infraction code.

Student completes the "What's Up?" module.

Provide student with ID#, and if the student is there for the Discipline Series, provide him or her with an infraction code, then go to www.mindoh.com/modules.

Student clicks on the reason he or she is there:
• Complete the "What's Up?: Student Incident Report"
• Complete a module in the MindOH! Discipline Series
• Complete a module in the MindOH! Life Skills Series

"Rule 1: Respect"
"Taking Charge: Responsibility"

Student prints "What's Up?" report and meets with administrator.

Student is sent either to In-School Suspension or Detention and can be assigned to complete further MindOH! modules.

Based on infraction, student completes either "Rule 1: Respect" or "Taking Charge: Responsibility."

The first time a student commits an infraction, the computer prints an infraction-specific "Thinking it Through" reflection worksheet for the student to complete.

The second time for the same infraction, the computer prints an infraction-specific "Walking the Talk" worksheet for student to interview an adult and complete an essay.

The third time for the same infraction, the computer routes student to the Life Skills Series. [Note: For Auto-Routing details, see the MindOH! School Administrators Handbook.]

Appropriate school authority reviews student incident report and worksheets.

MindOH! Life Skills Series™

Student enters his or her student ID#, grade level and gender.

Student chooses a module from the MindOH! Life Skills Series or chooses an activity sheet to print out:
• "It's Up to You: The Power of Choice"
• "Aspire to Achieve: Making Goals Happen"
• "Defusing Disagreements: Listen to Understand"

At the end of the modules, students are given an option to print activity sheets:
• "Watching my Thoughts"
• "Building a Habit"
• "Listen to Understand"

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APPENDIX B

THE 4 STEP PROCESS

MindOH!™

Keeping your mind over your matters.

The 4 Step Process

Progress Through the MindOH! Discipline Series™

1

STEP ONE: The Infraction
Student commits infraction and is sent to authority

| Infraction Occurs | MindOH! Infraction Code |

2

STEP TWO: The Conversation
Preparing student for conversation with authority

| Module: "What's Up?" | Incident Report | Meeting with Authority |

3

STEP THREE: The Choice
Student reviews decision that led to infraction

| Modules: Respect or Responsibility | Worksheet Printout | Turn in Worksheet to Authority |

4

STEP FOUR: The Follow-Up
More in-depth work with Life Skills Series

| Life Skills Module(s) | Worksheet Printout | Turn in Worksheet to Authority |

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(parent giving consent for child to participate)

PROJECT TITLE: *Does Character Education Reduce Discipline Problems?: A Collaborative Research Project Between MindOH! and Francis Howell Union High School*

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by MindOH! (an innovative interactive Web-based program designed to reduce discipline problems), the Francis Howell Union High School, and Beth Manke, Ph.D., from the Department of Human Development at California Sate University, Long Beach. Michael Hylen, Principal at Francis Howell Union High School will serve as the contact person for this research study. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he or she attends Francis Howell Union High School. It is estimated that 200 students will participate in the study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The staff at Francis Howell Union High School is committed to identifying the most effective methods in addressing discipline problems at the school. Francis Howell Union High School has therefore joined forces with MindOH! staff to test whether or not the MindOH! character education program is effective in redirecting negative student behavior and therefore reducing discipline problems. Information from this research project may be used to modify current discipline practices at Francis Howell Union High School.

PROCEDURES
If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will do the following things. Your child will be randomly assigned to either the *control group* or the *research group*. Random assignment occurs much the same way as flipping a coin. That is, your child will have an equal chance of being in either the control group or research groups. Students placed in the control group will continue to experience much of the same disciplinary practices that are currently in place at Francis Howell Union High School. In other words, if and when students in the control group commit a disciplinary infraction, such as fighting, they will be sent to the principal's office and wait to speak to one of the administrative staff. Upon entering the office, students will complete a short survey where they answer questions about why they were sent to the office and how they feel. Immediately prior to meeting with the school professional (after waiting), students will complete a few additional questions.

Children in the research group will experience a different process. If and when students in the research group commit a disciplinary infraction, they will be sent to the principal's office and will complete the MindOH! web-based character education program on a computer. This program uses flash media much like a television program to walk students through a series of topics and questions related to their discipline problem. Students use headphones to hear the program and have the opportunity to write about what happened and to think about what they do differently next time. It takes students about 25 minutes to complete the computer program. Upon completion of the computer program, a printout of the student's responses will be provided to the school official who will be meeting with the student about his or her

discipline problem. Students' multiple choice answers to questions will also be sent electronically to MindOH! over the Internet. None of the information, however, personally identifies the student. All written responses are deleted from the computer to protect the student's rights.

Classroom grades and standardized test scores in both the control and research group will also be obtained from staff at Francis Howell Union High School.

The use of control and research groups for dealing with discipline problems will continue from January 2005 to December 2005, after which all students will have the opportunity to use the MindOH! character education program if and when they commit a disciplinary infraction.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
Although there are no known risks associated with answering the control group survey questions or completing the MindOH! character education program, there is potential for discomfort in answering some of the questions about discipline problems. This potential discomfort, however, is expected to be no greater than that experienced in the traditional disciplinary practices that involved talking with a school professional about discipline problems. Please note that your child does not have to answer any question(s) he/she does not wish to answer and your child can terminate his or her participation in the research study at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY
Expected benefits from participating in this research study include student access to an innovative character education program that may reduce discipline problems by developing students' respect for themselves and others, and responsibility for their emotions and behavior. Results from this study will also assist Francis Howell Union High School staff as they work to improve their methods for dealing with student discipline problems. Further, results of this study will benefit MindOH! as they work to improve their computer program so that teachers and administrators at other schools can effectively address student discipline problems.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
Children are not paid for their participation in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Please note that your child will never be identified by name in any report or publication regarding this study. In order to protect your child's identity, your child's full name will not appear on any surveys or forms or in any electronic databases. Instead, a code number will be used to identify each child's information and only Dr. Manke will be able to map names, code numbers and children's information. At the end of the research study, the sheet that matches names with code numbers will be destroyed. In addition, the paper-and-pencil surveys collected as part of the study will be stored at the California State University,

Long Beach in a locked cabinet. Only Dr. Manke and her research assistants will have access to this cabinet. The electronic database generated as part of using the MindOH! program will be housed on a website managed by MindOH! staff. This database will be protected from unlawful entry by encrypted passwords and firewall. Anyone crashing the system would not be able to link answers to student ID numbers.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your child's participation in this case study is entirely voluntary. If your child participates in this study, you may withdraw your consent at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or non-participation will not affect your child's access to learning opportunities or guidance at the school. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions he or she doesn't want to answer and still remain in the study. Your child can terminate his or her participation in the study at any time.

INDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS
If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Michael Hylen at Francis Howell Union High School or Dr. Beth Manke at the California State University (562-985-2123).

SIGNATURE OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
I understand the procedures and conditions of my child's participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to have my child participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____   _____
         Name of Student   Name of Legal Representative

_____   _____
   Signature of Legal Representative   Date

APPENDIX D

CHART OF INFRACTION CODES

CHART OF INFRACTION CODES

Respect Module "Rule 1"
0001 Affection: Inappropriate Display
0002 Authority: Not obeying, disrespectful
0003 Bad language/cursing
0004 Bullying: one on one
0005 Bullying: in a group
0006 Disruptive behavior
0007 Fighting
0008 Passing notes in class
0009 Pushing/shoving
0010 Racial slurs
0011 Sleeping in class
0012 Stealing
0013 Talking in class
0014 Teasing/harassing
0015 Vandalism
0016 Verbal threats
0017 Cyberbullying

Responsibility Module "Taking Charge"
0051 Assignments: not turning in
0052 Assigned area: leaving w/o asking
0053 Cheating
0054 Consequences: avoiding d-hall, SAC
0055 Cutting classes
0056 Dress codes: general violation
0057 Dress codes: related to safety
0058 Drugs/Alcohol possession
0059 Electronic devices at school
0060 Flammable materials: possession
0061 Lying
0062 Participation: refusal to participate
0063 Running in halls
0064 Tardiness
0065 Tobacco: Possession
0066 Truancy
0067 Weapon: Possession

APPENDIX E

WHAT'S UP REPORT

FIRST NAME:
STUDENT ID#:
SENT TO THE OFFICE BY: Ms. Bailey
MEETING WITH: The Teacher
INF CODE: 0002 - Authority: Not obeying, disrespectful
DATE AND TIME: 2/18/2003 1:16 PM

WHAT'S UP REPORT

MINDOH! METER

How upset are you feeling right now?

uncomfortable

Is it your fault?
I guess so.

LEVEL 1: THE FACTS

Who was involved?
The people that were involved were my two friends and a teacher.

What happened and how did it happen?
What happened was that the teacher told us not to be late to lunch. I thought she was finished so I started to walk away and realized that maybe she wasn't done so I turned and asked her if she was finished. She said that she was tired of me and sent me to the office.

Where and when did it happen?
Where it happened was at school in the hallway.

LEVEL 2: YOUR OPINIONS

Why did this happen?
It happened because I think that she already didn't like me because I have argued with her before. When someone is wrong I let them know and I think she got extremely mad at me and not my friends because I have argued with her in the past.

What was your responsibility?
My responsibility was to be quiet and do what I am told.

If someone else was involved, what was his or her responsibility?
Their responsibility was the same as mine....to bequiet and do what they are told. and not be late to class or lunch.

What ran through your mind during this situation?
What ran through my mind was that this lady was wrong and I wanted to let her know but I thought that this time I should just keep my mouth shut and not smart off like I usually do.

1

STUDENT ID#:   FIRST NAME:

LEVEL 3: YOUR EMOTIONS

What were your feelings during the incident?

off the meter

Words that best describe how you felt at the time?
Angry, Frustrated, Hopeless, Confused, Resentful

LEVEL 4: IMPORTANCE

Why do you think you did what you did?
I think that I didn't do anything worng because she said that I talked back and I don't think I did.

Why did you feel the way you did?
I felt the way that I did because I hate it when people are wrong and they don't like to admit it or when they take out there anger on someone else.

LEVEL 5: YOUR ACTIONS

If it were possible to change things, what would you change?
I would change the fact that I would have never been in a confrontation with her again or and next time I would not have said any rsponce at all.

What do you think is the best consequence for what you did?
I think that the best consequence would be to write her an apology note for something I didn't do and let her conscience deal with the rest so she will know that she did something wrong and not me.

What actions would you take to make things right again?
I would not interact with her anymore and not get into anymore trouble for being late.

MINDOH! METER

Is there something else going on with your life that's making things hard?
Yes

Is someone else here on campus you'd like to talk to? Someone who will listen?
Yes.

How upset are you now?

uncomfortable

Is it your fault?
Yes.

2

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE SCHOOL REPORT

Mind**OHI**

\<Example School\>

August 01, 2003   to   May 31, 2004

Performance Highlights   - The statistics below are results from your students from this reporting period.
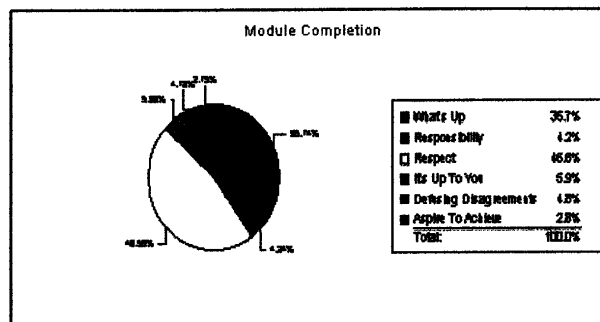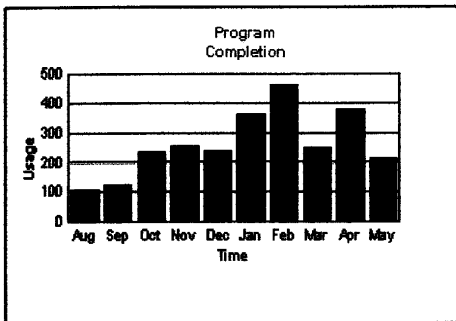
What's Up	43% Responded that there was someone else on campus they would like to talk to.
Respect	88% Reported that they either did or might have learned more about how to make better choices.
Responsibility	85% Have a better understanding of why being responsible will get them better results.
It's Up To You	90% Reported they did or might have learned more about how their thoughts affect what they feel and do.
Aspire To Achieve	94% Showed they did or might have learned about creating a positive habit to help reach their goals.
Defusing Disagreements	91% Indicated that this program was somewhat easy to understand.

Program Completion

A completion graph helps determine whether a client is effectively using the resources provided.

Module Completion

This graph indicates module completions for this reporting period to provide feedback on how program pieces are used.

Module Completion	
What's Up	35.7%
Responsibility	4.2%
Respect	46.6%
It's Up To You	5.9%
Defusing Disagreements	4.8%
Aspire To Achieve	2.8%
Total:	100.0%

Top Infractions

\<Example School\>
had a total of   2,616
infractions for this reporting period.

To most effectively impact discipline, it is best to know what your most frequently occurring issues are so that you can put efforts toward areas with the greatest necessity.

The more these tools are used, the more impactful and informative they become as proactive resources for administrators, teachers and students to build character and influence discipline.

More Information
Find out how your students are impacted - Review your administrative database:
www.mindoh.com/schooladmin

For questions or comments, please contact your customer support representative.

Frequency