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**A COMPARISON OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AT RICHVIEW MIDDLE
SCHOOL IN REGARD TO DISCIPLINE REFERRALS**

WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER WINTERS

A COMPARISON OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AT RICHVIEW MIDDLE
SCHOOL IN REGARD TO DISCIPLINE REFERRALS

A Field Study
Presented to the
Graduate and Research Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Education Specialist

by
William Christopher Winters
November, 1995

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ABSTRACT

This causal-comparative, or ex post facto, study was conducted in order to test if special education students at Richview Middle School are referred to the administration for disciplinary action with greater frequency than regular education students. The discipline records of all Richview Middle School students for the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years were reviewed and the discipline referrals were separated by special education and regular education students. The data was analyzed using the chi-square method and each hypothesis tested at the .05 level of significance. The data collected for this study showed consistency for each of the two years studied. In most of the hypotheses tested, special education students were referred for discipline with greater frequency than regular education students. No significant difference in frequency was found in the rate of referral of special and regular education female students or in the frequency with which special and regular education students received specific punishments for misbehavior. Portions of other hypotheses yielded no significant difference in referral rate, including students referred for skipping school, for weapons, for drugs and alcohol, and for bus behavior. Further, no significant difference in the rate of referral was found for special and regular education Black students and for students in special education classes only part of the day.

To the Graduate Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by William Christopher Winters entitled "A Comparison of Special Education and Regular Education Students at Richview Middle School in Regard to Discipline Referrals." I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

George M. Rawlinson III

Major Professor

We have read this Field Study
and recommend its acceptance.

[Signature]

Minor Professor

or

Second Committee Member

[Signature]

Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate
and Research Council

[Signature]

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Disciplining students is not the most pleasant task a school administrator must perform, yet it is essential to the efficient operation of any school. It is therefore important to identify which students are most likely to be referred to the principal's office for discipline. If this can be determined, better strategies to deal with these students and their inappropriate behaviors can be developed.

Often students who attend special education classes have unique needs and characteristics and are viewed as "discipline problems." Hardman (1979) reviewed a large body of research which described direct links between students performing below grade level and juvenile delinquency. If this is true, alternative strategies must be used to get students to replace inappropriate behaviors with appropriate ones. If this is not true, steps must be taken to abolish this myth through teacher education. Thus, this study will attempt to determine: 1) if there is a difference between the frequency with which special education students are referred for discipline compared to those students not identified as special education at Richview Middle School; and 2) if a difference does exist, what the cause(s) might be.

Statement of the Problem

The problem investigated in this study was the frequency of office discipline referrals of the total student population as well as certain groups within that population at Richview Middle School. This investigation attempted to determine the frequency with which subgroups within the special education student group were referred to the office for discipline compared to their regular education classmates and, if special education students were referred to the administration at a different rate, what reasons

seemed to account for these differences.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 significance level:

1. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education students and regular education students are referred to the principal's office for discipline when the total population of each is compared;
2. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education and regular education male students are referred for discipline;
3. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education and regular education female students are referred for discipline;
4. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education students and regular education students at each grade level (sixth, seventh, and eighth) are referred for discipline;
5. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students are referred for discipline for the following specific offenses: (a) tardies, (b) disruptive behavior, (c) disobedience, (d) disrespect, (e) profanity, (f) skipping class, (g) fighting and assault, (h) weapons, (i) drugs and alcohol, (j) bus behavior, and (k) "other";
6. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students receive the following punishments: (a) warnings, (b) detention, (c) in-school suspension, (d) out-of-school suspension, and (e)expulsion;

7. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students who receive special education services all day (three or more classes per day) and those who receive special education services part of the day (fewer than three classes per day) are referred for discipline;

8. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which students who are in special education classes part of the day (fewer than three classes per day) are referred for discipline by special education teachers compared to regular education teachers;

9. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students of different races (Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American) are referred for discipline.

Definition of Terms

C.D.C. (Comprehensive Development Class)--A category of special education student identified as being significantly below grade level; these students are in a self-contained classroom all day; many students in this class are identified as mentally retarded; these students are considered special education for this study.

Discipline referral--A form filled out by the teacher or other school employee which states a student's alleged infraction of Clarksville-Montgomery County School System's Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

Frequency--The percentage of students in a category who have a like characteristic (compared to the group as a whole).

Gifted--A classification of students covered by the Special Education Department of the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System but not

considered handicapped in IDEA; these students are not considered special education in this study.

Home school--The school for which a student is zoned to attend; this may be different from the school the student attends, usually because of the availability of programs.

IDEA--The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it updated the original special education legislation known as PL94-142.

IEP--Individualized Education Program, this is the program designed to address the specific educational needs of each handicapped student.

L.D.(Learning Disabled)--A special education category designated by the State for a student who has a discrepancy of two standard deviations between performance and verbal I.Q.

Multihandicapped--A special education classification consisting of students with at least two handicapping conditions and receiving related services in at least two areas; these students are not considered in the special education group in this study and are not counted in the total school population because they would not account for any possible discipline referrals.

Regular Education Student--Any student who neither qualifies for nor receives special education services and, included in this study, gifted students.

S.E.D.(Severely Emotionally Disturbed)--Students who meet certain criteria and often display extremely inappropriate behaviors; students who are in the self-contained S.E.D. class are not included as special education in this study and are not counted in the total school population since the nature of their handicap would indicate they would be disciplined more often than other students, thus their discipline referrals are not considered to fall within the parameters of this study.

Special Education Students- for this study, all students who qualify for and receive special education services except gifted, multihandicapped, and non-mainstreamed S.E.D. students.

Importance of the Study

This study was important for several reasons. While various studies have been made of the relationship between special education and juvenile delinquency (Hardman, 1979; Sikorski, 1991), it was necessary to study the frequency of discipline of special education students at the middle school level. If special education students are referred more often (based on percentage) than regular education students, the possible causes for this should be identified. Such a study could be utilized by the school and school system to identify ways to develop more appropriate behavior and establish policies for dealing with these students. This study was important because it allowed the administration at Richview Middle School to compare its punishments for special education and regular education students to see if they are consistent school-wide.

Limitations of the Study

The review of literature for this study was limited in that most of the information was obtained from one library, the Felix G. Woodward Library at Austin Peay State University and through inter-library loan. Further, the data for this study was limited to that from Richview Middle School, Clarksville, Tennessee for the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years. The number of years included in this study may prove to have been too few to make definitive conclusions which may or may not be consistent with other years or schools. The use of an "inclusion" program of special education students at the seventh grade level during the 1993-94 school year may prove

to be a contaminant, as special education students were “included” in the regular science and social studies classes. Research indicates (Siegel, 1992) that regular education teachers tend to hold negative attitudes toward students with learning handicaps.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Student discipline is a necessary part in the effective administration of any school. School administrators and teachers should continually strive to identify patterns of misbehavior in order to develop strategies to identify students most at-risk of being referred to the office for discipline and to establish guidelines which may prevent these inappropriate behaviors.

Discipline of students often poses a dilemma for administrators. They want to be consistent with the discipline imposed on all students. The discipline which is to be given to special education students poses an even greater dilemma in regard to consistency. Ellis and Geller (1993) outlined historical and practical guidelines for implementing disciplinary action with special education students. They provided broad to narrow interpretations of special education and discipline law cases and discussed their implications. Specifically, the *Goss vs. Lopez* and *Honig vs. Doe* decisions were emphasized. Both dealt with the extent and length of time disciplinary measures could be used against students. Suspensions of more than ten school days were considered a change of special education students' educational placement and cannot be imposed without a meeting and determination of placement by the student's Planning and Placement Team (or Multidisciplinary Team). Further, a student cannot receive disciplinary action for misbehavior which is a direct result of the student's handicap, a "manifestation of his or her handicapping condition." Further, in all cases, the due process rights of the child may not be abridged (Ellis & Geller, 1993; Education Law Center, 1984). The child must be given notice, verbal or written, of the charges against him or her, must be given an explanation of the evidence against him or her, and must be given an opportunity to present

his or her side of the story.

Ellis and Geller also discussed issues regarding an administrator's rights when he or she feels a special education student poses a threat to persons, property, or the education of others. Options included court injunctions and formal hearings before an impartial hearing officer. Basic guidelines presented for consideration by administrators when disciplining handicapped students included determining if the act was a direct result of the student's handicap, ensuring due process, using alternate means of punishment, seeking changes in educational placement and avoiding expulsions and cessation of educational services.

The Education Law Center (1984), while supporting the procedures of Ellis and Geller, stated further that disciplinary measures such as detention, work assignment, in-school suspension, temporary assignment to a time-out room, or a simple lecture are all appropriate for handicapped students. Emphasis was again made on due process, including such rights for students in special education programs as the opportunity for parents or guardians to review all the child's relevant records and obtain an independent educational evaluation of the student, written prior notice of any change of the student's program placement and written notice of any suspensions imposed on the student (this must be in the parent's native language, unless clearly unfeasible), and the opportunity for parents to present any complaint or objection they might have to the school district administration.

The role of special educators was a dimension added to special education discipline by Bartlett (1989). He reiterated the points found in the two previous articles but added the important role special educators must play in assisting in successful discipline of special education students. These

special educators must be “especially diligent in determining the relationship of the handicap to the misconduct.” They are often faced with trying to find or create programs which will meet the needs of both the student and the school community as a whole.

Another procedural article reviewed was by Horton (1993) in regard to special education student expulsions in light of the Honig vs. Doe decision. It was expressed that IEP teams, again the special educators, have a great responsibility to make a determination if the misbehavior is a direct result of the child’s disability. Further, the special education student may be expelled if it is determined that (1) the student was given full due process rights and (2) the determination is made that the misbehavior was not a direct result of the student’s handicapping condition. However, even if a special education student is expelled, the school system still has the obligation to provide the student with special education services in the areas addressed in the child’s IEP.

Additional articles, such as one by Golden (1993), try to serve as practical application “manuals” for administrators. Golden included a flow chart to guide administrators through the task of special education discipline and explained much of the previously mentioned case law to provide a basis for the procedures.

Many other articles exist in regard to the circumstances which must be considered in the discipline of special education students. Those reviewed above represent the core issues addressed in this area of administration. The review of literature to this point has illustrated the profound impact special education discipline has in regard to its use and the many safeguards which exist to protect handicapped students. The following research addresses

specific aspects of the problem addressed in this study.

One of the major concerns in education is to identify the frequency and sources of student misbehavior in school. A 1990 study by Baron attempted to describe these by using a sample of 312 students and 106 teachers from four private U.S. Department of State sponsored American schools in Venezuela. Baron developed an opinion survey which was completed by the sample groups, which included students from the seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades and their teachers. The responses were subjected to a series of one-way analyses of variance to determine if any significant differences existed between age groups, gender groups, or between students and teachers.

Baron tested nine hypotheses, with three each dealing with types, sources, and interventions of misbehaviors. While females viewed misbehavior occurring significantly more often than did males, both groups identified disruptive behaviors and profanity as being the most common misbehaviors. Additionally, ninth grade students also perceived misbehavior occurring significantly more often than did students at other grade levels.

The hypotheses addressing sources of student misbehavior were consistent by gender and by grade level. The students felt (1) the inability of individual students to control their actions and (2) encouragement from classmates were the most significant factors leading to misbehavior. Teachers, however, felt that lack of proper home training (parents failing to stress good behavior at home) was the primary cause for misbehavior.

The final hypotheses, addressing intervention methods to control misbehavior, was consistent for gender, grade level, and teachers. All groups felt individual, private reprimands were the most effective method to address

misbehavior. Baron did, however, perform two additional analyses to attempt to determine the severity of discipline problems in the schools studied and to what extent discipline affected student learning in those schools. The students perceived misbehavior to be a significantly more severe problem than did the teachers. Ironically, teachers tended to perceive misbehavior adversely affecting student learning while the students did not.

Baron's work provided an overview of perceptions of misbehavior by those directly involved with it at the school level, the students and teachers. Other research has addressed issues of equal importance to this study. Many studies attempted to establish correlations or predictors of which students were most likely to misbehave or be disciplined at school. One such study was conducted using antisocial and at-risk middle school boys (Walker, Stieber, & O'Neill, 1990). A longitudinal study was conducted using two groups of 41 students. Two studies were performed, one to compare the groups on a series of behavioral measures in grades five, six, and seven, and the other to use fifth grade variables as predictors for a series of seventh grade criterion measures for success or failure.

The first study used teacher ratings of social skills, classroom observations, playground observations, and school archival records. Results provided favorable profiles for the at-risk students, suggesting they were making relatively good school adjustments during middle school years. The profile of the antisocial group, however, was bleak at best. While only six or seven at-risk students per year were receiving special services, by seventh grade, 27 of the 39 antisocial students received such services. The antisocial group also performed worse in academic areas, had poorer attendance, had many more discipline contacts at each grade level, and were arrested

significantly more often than the at-risk group. For the three year period, three arrests were made of students in the at-risk group while 68 arrests were made of the antisocial students.

The second study resulted in certain degrees of items used as predictors from fifth grade variables studied when applied to seventh grade success or failure. Specifically, the best fifth grade predictors of success or failure for the students at the seventh grade level was attendance, followed by math achievement, then school discipline contacts.

Walker, Stieber, and O'Neill stated that too many of the students who fall into the antisocial group are not being identified as seriously emotionally disturbed. They did state, through their sample of subjects in this study, that almost three-fourths of the students in the antisocial group were receiving special services by seventh grade. They made no recommendations of how to help these students once they are identified as S.E.D., yet they stated that there are "often intense efforts by school systems to exclude such students from access to special education and related services." This seems to be contradictory to their findings. Further, it had previously been stated that the antisocial group, most of whom ended seventh grade in special programs, would be protected from expulsion (Ellis & Geller, 1993; Education Law Center, 1984; Bartlett, 1989; Horton, 1993; Golden, 1993).

Many factors may account for antisocial behaviors and juvenile delinquency as mentioned by Walker, Stieber, and O'Neill (1990). While many students who are S.E.D. become involved in the justice system (Wagner (1989) reported that nearly one-half of previously certified socially emotionally disturbed students were arrested within two years of leaving school) there is also a definite link between juvenile delinquency and specific

learning disabilities (Wolff, Waber, Bauermeister, Cohen & Ferber, 1982; Sikorski, 1991; Hardman, 1979). The Wolff, et al. (1982) study attempted to isolate the factor of socioeconomic class as it pertained to delinquency. This study quoted previous research which documented the link between learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency as being based primarily on children from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. The implication was that this SES variable might account for the learning disability, the delinquency, or both.

The study was performed using volunteers from a Massachusetts low security youth center. These youths were between 14 and 16 years old and were incarcerated for various offenses. Two control groups were established, matching the delinquent groups for age, sex, and race. Students in the control populations had no known histories of delinquency. The control groups were made up of 48 students from low SES backgrounds, like those of the delinquent group, and 48 students from high SES backgrounds. Each member of each group was given a neurological and detailed neuropsychological examination as well as a complete physical examination.

Results showed that the delinquent group showed more minor pathological signs than did the control groups on neurological assessments. Delinquents, on the neuropsychological assessments, were significantly impaired relative to both control groups on almost all language measures. This was after adjustment was made for non-verbal intelligence. In contrast, they did not differ significantly from the control groups, in most cases, on spatial and perceptual tasks, on skilled motor performance, and on attention. Only for the delinquent group were there impairments in neurological assessment and in verbal neuropsychological measures. Neurological status

was able to be used as a predictor for language performance of the delinquent group. One implication of this study was that certain factors within adolescent groups may be able to be used to correlate with or predict inappropriate or delinquent behavior.

The relationship between learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency has been studied closely over the years. The research agrees that a strong relationship does exist, and many have tried to develop programs to approach this phenomenon in more successful ways. Hardman (1979) discussed from an historical standpoint the delinquency rates and social/emotional adaptability of dyslexic and hyperkinetic children between the ages of eight and fourteen. She noted that of a group of upper middle class students in this category, only three percent fell in the normal range of psychological adjustment, while 61% were unable to cope emotionally and 34% were predicted to be institutionalized in adulthood because their values appeared to be extremely antisocial. Another study of 37 students with above average IQ scores, ages six to seventeen and diagnosed dyslexic or hyperkinetic, was conducted in 1978. The students were from middle to high income families with parents who were concerned about and involved with their children's development. In the area of social adjustment, 48% of the students scored above the average of prisoners in terms of social non-conformity and 37% scored in excess of psychiatric patients in terms of emotional stability.

Hardman suggested that specific learning disabilities cannot be addressed in terms of academic skills acquisition alone. Also suggested and recommended were that skills in acquiring necessary social and ethical values need to be integrated and emphasized in the curriculum. Hardman also suggested this be done in as early an intervention as possible before the

student begins the cycle of inappropriate behavior and academic difficulties.

The 1991 work of Sikorski restated the growing problem of handicapped students and adults involved in the court system. While the relationship is apparent, the "documentation of specific descriptive variables, causal mechanisms, and effective treatments has been difficult to establish." The number of students being served in special education programs has continued to increase. Between 1976 and 1986, the number of students served in special education programs in public schools grew from eight and one-third percent to nearly eleven percent. Further, as percentages of the total public school population, the number of students identified as learning disabled and seriously emotionally disturbed rose from about two percent to nearly five percent and from one-half percent to nearly one percent, respectively. The "typical profile" of a learning disabled child was said to be a 10- to 11-year-old boy in the fourth or fifth grade, two or more years behind grade level in language and reading skills, at least one and one-half years behind in mathematics and possibly displaying behavioral characteristics such as attention and/or hyperactivity problems, poor relationships with peers, poor impulse control, a low tolerance to frustration and sometimes a tendency to be overly aggressive.

Sikorski also cited studies in which 1,943 male students from urban areas were selected and matched for delinquent and non-delinquent backgrounds. The results indicated that 18.9% of the non-delinquent and 36.5% of the delinquent groups met the criteria to be considered learning disabled. Also cited was an intervention model program which was conducted to study the effects of additional individual remediation for learning disabled students. Though some gains were made academically by

the intervention group versus the non-remediated control group, the gains were not to a significant degree. Additionally, students with 40-50 hours of remediation self-reported fewer future incidents of involvement with the court system. Whether this decreased involvement with the court system was because of academic gain was questioned. Sikorski felt it was more likely the result of a good relationship between the students and the learning disabilities specialist who directed the remediation. The atmosphere provided may have facilitated socialization and attachment, which in turn may have increased motivation.

Identifying the major factors which might lead to junior and senior high school students being suspended from school was the topic studied by Hawkins (1988). The study was conducted by examining the discipline histories of 219 students who had been suspended several times from the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools. This number constituted only two percent of the district's population in grades 7-12. Those students who were suspended more than once differed greatly from those who had one or no suspensions. A student's placement in special education classes was one of the factors correlating most closely with multiple suspensions, along with involvement in extracurricular activities, academic grades and school attendance. Suspensions were divided into five categories: 1) fighter; 2) student-in-crisis; 3) truant; 4) low achiever; and 5) episodic. The data supported the contention that for all categories except for episodic offenders, fairly accurate predictions could be made as to who would become a suspendee. Intervention strategies used with these groups had varying success, but late and inappropriate interventions contributed greatly to failure of the intervention. Recommendations from this study included justification

for the differentiation of treatment of students with particular types of behavior problems.

One of the basic questions raised in light of this literature is why are special education students more likely to display inappropriate behaviors which get them involved in the court system. Similarly, Wesolaski (1992) investigated what factors tend to precipitate student referrals to special education. Specifically, the purpose was to determine if behavior was a factor which differentiated between low achievers referred for special education services and low achievers not referred. Fifty elementary school teachers were asked to complete a behavior problem checklist on two low achievers in their classrooms. Each teacher had to select one low achiever who had and one who had not been referred for special education services. Of the 50 teachers asked to participate, 30 responded and were included in the study. The students described in the teacher surveys were predominantly male, with 76.7% of the students in the referred group and 66.7% of the students in the non-referred group being male.

The results of Wesolaski's research indicated that low achieving students who have behavior problems were referred to special education more often than low achieving students with good behavior. This suggested that when a classroom teacher refers a student for special education services, variables other than academic ability may be influencing the teacher's decision to refer. Other research was cited to support this finding.

Wesolaski recommended that schools implement safeguards which require special services be offered to students who were referred for problems other than those which are academic. Also recommended was better support for regular classroom teachers who work with low achievers or handicapped

students.

The final study reviewed dealt with teacher perceptions of and attitudes toward mainstreamed learning handicapped students (Siegel, 1992). Just as Wesolaski (1992) reported that low achieving students with behavior problems were referred to special education more often than low achieving students, Siegel's study was, in part, to determine if the same types of attitudes were true of regular education teachers toward their L.D. students. The author acknowledged that previous studies had shown teachers hold negative attitudes toward mainstreamed students. Siegel assumed that teachers with negative attitudes toward mainstreaming would reject having learning handicapped students in their classrooms.

Siegel's study was divided into two parts. The first was to explore the overall attitudes teachers had toward their mainstreamed learning handicapped students. An attitude questionnaire was given to a sample of 44 fourth through sixth grade teachers. Information contained therein included questions about selected handicapped and non-handicapped students in their classrooms, information about themselves, and behavior profiles on the students selected from their classrooms. The second part of the study was to examine the relationship of teacher attitudes to their behaviors toward those students. The investigator conducted observations in two of the classrooms for 20 hours each.

The results indicated that teachers rated their learning handicapped students higher on the "rejecting" questions of the survey. Additionally, the teachers reported more attachment to their non-learning handicapped students. Conversely, the teachers expressed more concern for their learning handicapped students than for those who were non-learning handicapped.

The results of the second part of this study were from the naturalistic observations. They were correlated with the questionnaire results from part one and revealed that teachers' general attitudes about their mainstreamed learning handicapped students were more negative than their specific attitudes toward the same group. Within their own classrooms, the teachers' attitudes toward their students seemed to manifest themselves based on student behavior. The students who were most rejected in specific classrooms were the ones whose behavioral characteristics were not those of the ideal student. Further, those students who were more rejected exhibited more behavior problems and demanded more of the teacher's time for management concerns.

The literature provided historical and legal background information in regard to discipline and special education students. Further, it established a link between special education placement and inappropriate behaviors, although not in a causal manner. Most significantly, the importance of teacher attitudes and perceptions of misbehavior was examined in regard to discipline in general (Baron, 1990), attitudes toward special education students (Siegel, 1992) and teacher perceptions which lead to special education referrals (Wesolaski, 1992).

Discipline, especially as it concerns special education students, is an important as well as difficult problem with which schools are faced. Not only is there a great need to deal with discipline as situations occur, but even greater seems to be the need to develop strategies to identify sources of inappropriate behaviors and to develop ways to prevent them. The research indicated a pattern of general feelings that there is a definite relationship between misbehavior and learning disabilities, both in and out of the school

setting (Baron, 1990; Hawkins, 1988; Hardman, 1979; Sikorski, 1991).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This research was conducted to determine if there is a significant relationship between certain subgroups of special education and regular education students in the number of referrals for discipline. The data collected were for the 1992-1993 and the 1993-1994 school years. The study involved analysis of the frequencies of discipline referrals of special education and regular education students at Richview Middle School based on school records from a two year period. This was done through a causal-comparative study using the chi square method of data analysis. The two years involved in the study allowed for analysis of information to identify trends for each year as well as providing a view of the discipline imposed by the same two administrators who were employed at the school during those years. The concern that prompted the study was to see if special education students and regular education students tend to be treated differently by teachers and administrators based on frequency of discipline referrals and by administrative discipline imposed. The major question investigated in this study was:

Is there a significant difference between the frequency with which special education students are referred for discipline compared with regular education students?

The procedures and methods are described in this chapter under the following topics: (1) null hypotheses; (2) description of subjects; and (3) research design and procedures.

Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with

which special education students and regular education students are referred to the principal's office for discipline when the total population of each is compared;

2. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education and regular education male students are referred for discipline;

3. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education and regular education female students are referred for discipline;

4. There will be no significant difference between the frequency with which special education students and regular education students at each grade level (sixth, seventh, and eighth) are referred for discipline;

5. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students are referred for discipline for the following specific offenses: (a) tardies, (b) disruptive behavior, (c) disobedience, (d) disrespect, (e) profanity, (f) skipping class, (g) fighting and assault, (h) weapons, (i) drugs and alcohol, (j) bus behavior, and (k) "other";

6. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students receive the following punishments: (a) warnings, (b) detention, (c) in-school suspension, (d) out-of-school suspension, and (e)expulsion;

7. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students who receive special education services all day (three or more classes per day) and those who receive special education services part of the day (fewer than three classes per day) are referred for

discipline;

8. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which students who are in special education classes part of the day (fewer than three classes per day) are referred for discipline by special education teachers compared to regular education teachers;

9. There will be no significant difference in the frequency with which special education students and regular education students of different races (Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American) are referred for discipline.

Description of the Subjects

The study involved all students who were enrolled at Richview Middle School, Clarksville, Tennessee during the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years. The school consisted of 910 students during the 1992-93 school year and 930 students during 1993-94. A majority of the students were from middle- to high-income families. The minority population of the school was approximately 12.5% of the total student population in 1992-93 and 11.5% in 1993-94, with the classification of "Black" being the most predominant minority. Most of the students were from rural and suburban areas, with approximately seven percent of the total student population from the urban area of the city. For purposes of this study, students who were in the multihandicapped and the S.E.D. classrooms were neither used in the study nor counted as part of the total school population. The multihandicapped students were excluded because the nature of their handicaps does not lend itself to this study. The S.E.D. students were excluded because the very nature of their handicap indicates they would be disciplined more often in the classroom, as well as being sent to the office for discipline. In the case of each

of the two previous groups, many of the students resided outside the Richview Middle School zone but were bused to the school because the programs were not offered at the students' home schools. These situations caused a reduction in total numbers used in the study in regard to school population. Further, for purposes of this study, students identified as gifted were considered part of the regular education group. There were approximately 65 gifted students at Richview Middle School each year of the study.

Research Design and Procedures

Design

This study utilized a causal-comparative, or ex post facto, design. Students were divided into two groups--special education and regular education. Subgroups that were examined within the framework of special education and regular education included gender (male or female), grade level (sixth, seventh, or eighth), category of referral (tardies, disruptive behavior, disobedience, disrespect, profanity, skipping class, fighting and assault, weapons, drugs and alcohol, bus behavior, or "other"), punishments received (warning, detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion), race (Black, white, Hispanic, and Asian), and, for the special education group, portion of the day in special education (whole or part) and teacher referring student (special education or regular education teacher). The data were analyzed using the chi square method, with a significance level of .05.

Procedures

Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the director of schools, supervisor of middle school instruction, and the

supervisor of student services. The collection and analysis of data did not use any record of student names and complete confidentiality and anonymity of students and records were maintained. Each group was compared by over-all percentage of referrals and by the subgroup categories previously mentioned. The chi square test was performed to determine if there seemed to be a significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies in each category.

Total school populations used for statistical purposes were lowered from 910 to 887 for the 1992-93 school year and from 930 to 900 for 1993-94. This was based on the previously mentioned omission of multihandicapped and S.E.D. students from the study.

Discipline referrals were separated and logged as special education and regular education and were then tabulated according to each hypothesis. This provided the data that were necessary to perform the chi-square analysis to compare the frequency of referrals for special education and regular education.

The data collected for each section of each hypothesis allowed analysis using the chi square method. The first hypothesis was to test the frequency of special education and regular education referrals. The number of special education students was divided by the total number of students included in the study. The total number of referrals was then multiplied by this quotient to obtain the expected frequency of referrals for each group. The number of total students and total referrals are found in Table 3.1.

The second hypothesis tested was a comparison of the frequency of referral of male special education students to that of male regular education students. The number of special education students was divided by the total

number of male students to establish the percentage it represented of the total

Table 3.1

Total Population and Referrals

Year	<u>Special Education</u>		<u>Regular Education</u>	
	Population	Referrals	Population	Referrals
1992-93	97	274	790	915
1993-94	99	331	801	1189

male population. The same was done with the number of regular education male students with the total number of male students. The total number of discipline referrals of male students was then multiplied by these percentages to derive the frequency of referrals which should be expected of each group. This was done for both 1992-93 and 1993-94, with the data presented in Table 3.2. These data refer to raw numbers, not percentages.

Table 3.2

Numbers of Referrals by Sex

Discipline Referral Group (Year)	<u>Total Population</u>		<u>Number of Referrals</u>	
	Special	Regular	Special	Regular
	Education	Education	Education	Education
Males				
1992-93	71	397	262	744
1993-94	72	409	313	953
Females				
1992-93	26	393	12	171
1993-94	27	392	18	236

The same procedure was used for the third hypothesis, in which the frequency of referral of special education female students was compared to

that of regular education female students. The data for this hypothesis are also presented in Table 3.2.

The fourth hypothesis was divided into three parts. It addressed the issue of the frequency of referral of special education students to regular education students at each grade level (6, 7, and 8) represented at Richview Middle School. For this hypothesis the number of special education students at each grade level was divided by the total grade enrollment. Likewise, the number of regular education students was divided by the total grade enrollment. This established the percentage of students at each grade level who belonged to each category. The total number of referrals in each grade was then multiplied by the percentages of special education and regular education students to establish the frequency of discipline referrals to be expected at each grade level. Table 3.3 presents the actual numbers for this during 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Table 3.3
Discipline Referrals by Grade Level

Grade Level	<u>Total Population</u>		<u>Number of Referrals</u>	
	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education
6th Grade				
1992-93	30	273	95	301
1993-94	32	269	72	360
7th Grade				
1992-93	36	258	104	225
1993-94	33	285	125	533
8th Grade				
1992-93	31	259	75	389
1993-94	34	247	134	296

Hypothesis five in this study was concerned with the frequency with

which special education students and regular education students were referred to the administration for discipline by offense. The offenses used were tardies, disruptive behavior, disobedience, disrespect, profanity, skipping class, fighting/assault, weapons, drugs /alcohol, bus behavior, and "other." The category "other" included violations of school discipline policies which occurred infrequently, such as gambling, lewd conduct, theft, cheating, vandalism, possession of tobacco, gambling, instigating fights, and other conduct warranting discipline. The categories used constituted the core of the offenses with which a student could be charged according to the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (1993). In this hypothesis, percentages of the total student

Table 3.4

Discipline Referrals by Category of Offense

Offense	1992-93		1993-94	
	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education
Tardies	41	97	41	128
Disruptive Behavior	65	232	86	304
Disobedience	68	185	61	247
Disrespect	20	54	34	86
Profanity	9	26	8	33
Skipping	1	13	6	29
Fighting	19	79	18	77
Weapons	2	6	2	2
Drugs/Alcohol	0	0	1	7
Bus Behavior	29	189	59	207
Other	20	34	16	68

Note.

	1992-93	1993-94
Total Special Education Population:	97	99
Total regular Education Population:	790	801

population which represented special education and regular education

students were established. This was done by dividing the number of students in each group by the total school enrollment. Then the total number of referrals for each category was multiplied by the percentages to establish the expected frequencies for each group. Table 3.4 presents the data collected to perform the chi square analysis for this hypothesis.

In the testing of the sixth hypothesis a slightly different method was used for the chi square analysis. To assess the punishments students received, the assumption was made that the best way to analyze the data would be to compare the percentages of disciplinary actions (warnings, detention, assignment to the In-School Suspension program, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion) taken against special education students to the total number of disciplinary actions to see if the percentages would, through the chi square method, produce results that would lead to acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. To do this, the raw numbers of regular education students' disciplinary action for each category were divided by the total number of regular education student disciplinary actions. The same percentages were applied to the total disciplinary actions against special education students to arrive at the numbers used for expected occurrences of disciplinary actions for those students.

Table 3.5 lists the data for this hypothesis. This method was used based on the logical assumption that if the fifth null hypothesis were to be rejected, one could reasonably assume the frequency of punishments would require this hypothesis to be rejected, since there is one punishment for each offense referred.

The seventh and eighth hypotheses addressed the frequency of discipline referrals in regard to the special education population only. The

Table 3.5
Disciplinary Actions Assigned to Students

Disciplinary Action (Year)	Special Education	Regular Education	Regular Education Percentage
Warning			
1992-93	142	485	53.0%
1993-94	160	593	49.9%
Detention			
1992-93	57	190	20.8%
1993-94	63	214	18.0%
In-School Suspension			
1992-93	52	179	19.6%
1993-94	82	243	20.4%
Out-of-School Suspension			
1992-93	21	55	6.0%
1993-94	24	121	10.2%
Expulsion			
1992-93	2	6	0.7%
1993-94	2	18	1.5%

seventh compared the frequency of referrals of special education students who received special education services for half of the school day or more (three or more classes per day) with special education students who received services for less than half the day (fewer than three classes.) These data are found in Table 3.6

This analysis involved calculating the percentage of special education students receiving three or more classes of special education per day and the percentage receiving fewer than three classes per day. The total number of special education referrals was multiplied by each of these percentages to establish the expected number of referrals for each group.

Hypothesis eight, also concerned with special education students only,

Table 3.6

Referrals of Special Education Students By Special Education Classes Served

Year	Three or More Classes Per Day		Fewer Than Three Classes Per Day	
	Student Total	Referral Total	Student Total	Referral Total
1992-93	59	146	38	128
1993-94	62	208	37	123

was designed to determine if the "part-time" (fewer than three classes per day) special education students were referred for discipline by special education teachers with the same frequency as being referred by regular education teachers. The group contained in "regular education teachers" included school administrators and bus drivers of regular education buses. An assumption was made that half of the referrals would come from each group of teachers, so the number expected constituted one-half of the total number of discipline referrals for each group in this analysis. Table 3.7 lists these numbers.

Table 3.7

Referrals of Part-time Special Education Students by Teacher Assignment

Year	Total Referrals	Referrals by	Referrals by
		Special Education Teachers	Regular Education Teachers
1992-93	128	36	92
1993-94	123	27	96

The final hypothesis, number nine, involved the frequency of referrals of special education students and regular education students by race. In the analysis of data for this hypothesis, percentages by race were calculated for

special education and regular education students. The total number of referrals for the race was then multiplied by each percentage to establish the expected number of referrals. This allowed for chi square analysis for each race group within the hypothesis. Table 3.8 includes these data, showing the totals for each race by special or regular education and by the year studied.

Table 3.8
Referrals by Race

Race (Year)	Special Education		Regular Education	
	Student Total	Referral Total	Student Total	Referral Total
Black				
1992-93	22	61	65	127
1993-94	14	28	52	136
White				
1992-93	69	208	714	733
1993-94	81	282	723	1022
Hispanic				
1992-93	6	5	1	3
1993-94	3	5	8	36
Asian				
1992-93	0	0	18	12
1993-94	1	3	17	8

Note. There were no Native Americans enrolled in 1992-93 and only one in 1993-94.

Description of Measures Employed

Each category within each hypothesis was analyzed using the chi square method. The chi square method in each case consisted of the square of the total expected minus the total observed in the category. That number was then divided by the number expected for the category. Each analysis consisted of two variables which gave a degree of freedom of one. Using this formula at a level of significance (p) of $<.05$, the χ^2 had to be equal to or less than

3.841 to be able to accept the null hypothesis for each hypothesis.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter contains a summary of the data and provides a representation of the methods used to examine the hypotheses. The data analysis consisted of statistical testing of the nine null hypotheses. Appropriate data were collected and are provided in tables which show the results of each analysis.

Summary and Analysis of the Data

The data reflect the analysis of discipline referrals at Richview Middle School for the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years. This involved a tally of discipline referrals by special education and regular education students in regard to each hypothesis.

The study involved discipline referrals for the study period with the exception of students in the multihandicapped and the S.E.D. classes. These classes were excluded because the nature of their disabilities might improperly skew the results were they to be included. Thus the special education group consisted primarily of L.D. and C.D.C. students while the regular education group was comprised of regular education students and students identified as gifted. Multihandicapped and S.E.D. students were excluded from both the special education and total school population numbers.

As previously described, the analysis of data was conducted using the chi square method for each component of each hypothesis. The results of the analysis presented in Table 4.1 are for the first hypothesis and indicate the overall relationship between the frequency of discipline referrals for special education students and regular education students. The indication for each year studied was a significant difference in the rate of discipline referrals with

special education students referred with greater frequency.

Table 4.1

Chi Square Analysis Results for Overall Group

Year	χ^2	<u>N</u>
1992-93	175.3	887
1993-94	180.7	900

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; at this level the $df = 1$ (3.841).

The information found in Table 4.2 refers to the analysis of data for the second and third hypotheses. It contains the chi square results for each sex for each year studied. These results showed male special education students referred for discipline more often than their regular education counterparts while no significant difference was found between the referral rates of female special education and regular education students.

Table 4.2

Chi Square Analysis Results for Referrals by Sex

Referral Group	χ^2	df	<u>N</u>
Males			
1992-93	96.0	1	468
1993-94	93.7	1	481
Females			
1992-93	.18	1	419
1993-94	.25	1	419

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; at this level the $df - 1 = 3.841$.

Discipline referrals were examined in the fourth hypothesis as to frequency by grade. The results were consistent for each year, and the number

of students at each grade level was very close for each year studied. These results are in Table 4.3 and indicate that special education students, at each grade, were referred for discipline significantly more often than regular education students.

Table 4.3
Chi Square Analysis Results for Referrals by Grade

Grade	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<u>N</u>
6th Grade			
1992-93	84.1	1	303
1993-94	16.5	1	301
7th Grade			
1992-93	116.6	1	294
1993-94	53.3	1	318
8th Grade			
1992-93	14.0	1	290
1993-94	147.1	1	281

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; at this level the *df* -1 = 3.841.

With the large number of components of each hypothesis, the chi square analysis allowed for a comparison of statistical data of the special education versus regular education groups. As with the comparison of discipline referrals by offense category as found in Table 4.4, the information presented involved a large number of categories for analysis for each hypothesis. The data also tended to be consistent for both years studied. The results, overall, tended to be similar for most categories in each hypothesis, providing support for reliability of the results and their analysis.

As was stated previously, a slightly different method was used to set

Table 4.4
Chi Square Analysis Results for Referrals by Offense

Offense	
(Year)	χ^2
Tardies	
1992-93	50.6
1993-94	28.7
Disruptive Behavior	
1992-93	38.1
1993-94	48.3
Disobedience	
1992-93	64.2
1993-94	24.1
Disrespect	
1992-93	20.2
1993-94	38.0
Profanity	
1992-93	7.1
1993-94	4.5
Skippping Class	
1992-93	.6
1993-94	1.1
Fighting	
1992-93	6.5
1993-94	7.2
Weapons	
1992-93	1.1
1993-94	.
Drugs/Alcohol	
1992-93	.
1993-94	0
Bus Behavior	
1992-93	1.1
1993-94	34.8
Other	
1992-93	38.6
1993-94	6.1

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; for each, $df = 1$ (3.841); $N = 887$ (1992-93) and 900 (1993-94).

*Number of referrals too small for analysis

up the chi square analysis of punishments given for misbehavior. This was

done because if one group were to have a higher referral rate than the other, the rate of punishments would also have to be greater. The data, as presented in Table 4.5, allowed for this by comparing the rate of disciplinary punishments in each category with the total number of punishments for that group. This allowed for analysis of punishments in terms of consistency of numbers when comparing the special education and regular education groups. No significant differences were found in this hypothesis.

Table 4.5
Chi Square Analysis Results for Punishments Given

Punishment (Year)	χ^2
Warning	
1992-93	.06
1993-94	.15
Detention	
1992-93	0
1993-94	.15
In-School Suspension	
1992-93	.07
1993-94	2.88
Out of School Suspension	
1992-93	1.56
1993-94	2.94
Expulsion	
1992-93	0
1993-94	1.8

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; for each, $df = 1$ (3.841); $N = 1189$ (1992-93) and 1520 (1993-94).

The next two hypotheses of the study only concerned special education students, comparing those who received instruction in three or more special education classes per day with those who received fewer than three. Table 4.6

contains data for analysis of discipline referrals for special education students who receive special education services for three or more classes per day and those who receive services in two or fewer per day. The results indicated a significant difference in referrals in 1992-93 but not in 1993-94. Table 4.7 contains the chi square analysis information of discipline referrals by special education and regular education teachers for the students who received fewer than three classes of special education instruction per day. These results indicated special education students were referred significantly more often by regular education teachers than by special education teachers.

Table 4.6

Chi Square Analysis Results for Special Education Referrals by
Number of Special Education Classes

Year	χ^2	<u>N</u>
1992-93	6.76	97
1993-94	.01	99

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; for each, $df = 1$ (3.841).

Table 4.7

Chi Square Analysis Results for Special Education Referrals by
Referring Teacher (Special Education or Regular Education)

Year	χ^2	<u>N</u>
1992-93	24.6	38
1993-94	38.4	37

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; for each, $df = 1$ (3.841).

The final area of investigation, the comparison of referrals by race for special education and regular education students, has its chi square analysis results listed in Table 4.8. The data reflect the finding that there was a significant difference in referral rate of Black special education and regular

education students in 1992-93 but there was no significant difference in 1993-94. For each other area there was a significant difference in referral rates between special education and regular education students, with special education students referred more often for all races except Hispanic. For that race regular education students were referred significantly more often than special education students in both years studied. Further, there were no Asian students receiving special education services in 1992-93.

Table 4.8
Chi Square Analysis Results for Referrals by Race

Race (Year)	χ^2	<u>N</u>
Black		
1992-93	4.7	87
1993-94	1.8	66
White		
1992-93	189.7	783
1993-94	189.7	804
Hispanic		
1992-93	4.6	7
1993-94	4.5	11
Asian		
1992-93	*	*
1993-94	4.4	18

Note. Significance at the .05 level of confidence; for all, $df = 1$ (3.841).

* Calculations unable to be made since there were no Asian special education students during the 1992-93 school year.

Summary of Results

Null Hypothesis

The null hypotheses stated there is no statistical difference between the

frequency with which special education students are referred to the principal's office for discipline compared to regular education students at Richview Middle School. The statistical analysis comparing the frequency of referrals of special education student with regular education students yielded data that rejected this hypothesis. In most cases, special education students were referred to the office for discipline more often than regular education students. The chi square analysis at the .05 level of significance with F being greater than 3.841 for each analysis, a significant difference in the frequency of referrals was found for the other hypotheses except for numbers two (frequency of referrals for female students) and five (frequency of punishments given). These two hypotheses were accepted for both years. Portions of other hypotheses were also accepted, including the frequency of referrals for students categorized as skipping school (both 1992-93 and 1993-94), students referred for weapons (1992-93), students referred for drugs or alcohol (1993-94), students referred for bus behavior (1992-93), students who were in special education classes part-time versus full-time (1993-94), and referrals of Black students (1993-94). Even with these few exceptions, the overwhelming majority of the data supported rejection of the null hypothesis. In most cases, except for those mentioned above, the data was consistent for both years studied.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

In order to maintain an environment conducive to learning in any school, discipline must be maintained. This is done in a variety of ways, from self-discipline to disciplinary measures being imposed by teachers or administrators. One of the most critical aspects in the discipline of students is the perceived fairness and consistency with which disciplinary measures are imposed. This fairness, however, can be mitigated by other factors which may play a part in the reasons for misbehavior. These items must also be dealt with in order to ensure this fairness. The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency of discipline referrals of students receiving special education services as compared to those students who do not receive any special education services. This study suggested that, in general, special education students as a total group tend to be referred to the administration for discipline more often than those students who are not in special education classes.

A body of current literature was reviewed to investigate the problem better. It indicated that teacher attitudes toward special education students in the regular education classroom tend to be negative. Further, teachers were more likely to refer low achieving students with poor behavior for special education testing than low achieving students with good behavior. Other literature indicated a definite pattern of higher rates of juvenile delinquency for special education versus regular education children. The present study was conducted to add to the literature investigating the relationship between school discipline referrals and special education students.

The empirical portion of this study involved all discipline referrals at

Richview Middle School during the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years. The school population for each year was approximately 900 students, with slightly fewer than 100 students each year being identified as special education students. Referrals were analyzed as to frequency by sex, grade level, offense, punishments given, number of special education classes, referring teacher, and race. The data were analyzed using the chi square method at the .05 level of confidence. This allowed for either acceptance or rejection of each null hypothesis.

Conclusions

The basis for this study was derived by a search of previous studies to determine if special education students are referred for discipline more often than regular education students in the nation's schools. Although no other studies using this design were found, other related studies did indicate poor regular education teacher attitudes toward special education students in their classes (Siegel, 1992) and that special education students have a higher rate of juvenile delinquency than regular education students (Hardman, 1979; Sikorski, 1991). Further, the research indicated that one primary determinant of whether a low achieving student is referred for special education testing or not is the child's behavior. Those students with poor behaviors were referred for testing more often than those with good behavior (Wesolaski, 1993). The conclusions of this study were based on the data collected from two school years at Richview Middle School.

According to the analysis of each hypothesis, the chi square analysis results established from the testing remained statistically close in most areas for each year examined in this study. Each hypothesis was tested by chi square analysis at the .05 level of significance. For the first hypothesis the

analysis rejected the null hypothesis for both years studied. The results indicated a significant difference in the frequency of special education and regular education discipline referrals, with special education students being referred, proportionally, more often. This result, the primary finding of this study, provided the basis for the rest of this research.

The hypotheses which tested the referrals of special education and regular education students by sex provided mixed, yet consistent, results. Male special education students were referred for discipline significantly more often than regular education males during both years studied. The null hypothesis for males was thus rejected. For females, however, there was no significant difference in the frequency of referral of special and regular education students. This finding, consistent for each year, provided acceptance of the null hypothesis.

The fourth hypothesis, being consistent with hypothesis one, rejected the null hypothesis in all cases. This hypothesis examined referrals by grade level. Analysis provided results which rejected the null hypothesis for each grade level for each year studied. In all cases special education students were referred significantly more frequently than regular education students.

Perhaps the most extensive analysis in this study was that of the fifth hypothesis. This dealt with the frequency of referrals by offense. For this study, eleven offenses were analyzed for both years studied. The results were quite consistent, with the null hypothesis being rejected for both years in the areas of tardies, disruptive behavior, disobedience, disrespect, profanity, fighting, and "other". In each of these cases, special education students were referred significantly more often than regular education students. In regard to skipping class, the null hypothesis was accepted for both years studied,

based on analysis results which indicated no significant difference in the frequencies with which special and regular education students were referred in this category. For the categories of weapons and drugs/alcohol there was not enough data to do a reliable analysis for both years, so only one year for each was included. The analysis of frequency of referrals for weapons during the 1992-93 school year was such to accept the null hypothesis. Likewise, the data for referrals for drugs and alcohol during the 1993-94 school year showed no significant difference, providing acceptance of the null hypothesis for that category also.

The analysis of punishment given by the administration to students provided results which were similar for each possible punishment. For each category and for both years, the null hypothesis was accepted that there was no significant difference in the frequency of punishments. This indicated consistency in the discipline administered by the administration.

The analysis of hypotheses seven and eight provided mixed results. For 1992-93, the chi square results indicated a significant difference in the rate of referrals of part day and whole day special education students. The students in special education classes fewer than three classes per day were referred with significantly more frequency than special education students with three or more classes per day, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. In 1993-94, however, there was no significant difference and the null hypothesis was accepted.

Both years studied in regard to the teachers who referred the part day special education students yielded similar results. There was a significant difference in the frequency with special education and regular education teachers referred special education students who had fewer than three special

education classes per day. Regular education teachers referred these students significantly more often, thus the null hypothesis was rejected. This is consistent with the Siegel (1992) findings that regular education teachers had more rejecting attitudes toward their mainstreamed learning handicapped students.

The final hypothesis, referrals by race, provided results that were in line with the previous results. For white students, the null hypothesis was rejected each time. White special education students were referred with significantly greater frequency than white regular education students. The same was true for Black students during the 1992-93 school year, in which the null hypothesis was rejected. In 1993-94, though, the null hypothesis was accepted as it was found there was no significant difference in the frequency of referrals of Black special education and Black regular education students. Referral frequency for Hispanic students were a bit different. While the null hypothesis was rejected each time, it was done so because Hispanic special education students were referred significantly *less* often than Hispanic regular education students. The results for Asian students were limited to the 1993-94 school year since there were no Asian special education students at Richview Middle School during the 1992-93 school year. These results rejected the null hypothesis as Asian special education students were referred significantly more often than Asian regular education students.

The findings from this study seem to support the literature reviewed. Special education students tend to be referred for discipline more frequently than regular education students. This can be traced to several factors found in the literature and supported in these findings. Teacher attitudes seem to play a large role in why students are referred (Siegel, 1992). Further, as stated in

Wesolaski's 1993 study, teachers refer low achieving students with behavior problems for special education more often than low achievers with good behavior. This could greatly account for the greater percentages of special education discipline referrals. Another factor to be considered is that special education students seem to get into trouble more often, whether in or out of school (Hardman, 1979; Sikorski, 1991). With all this corroborating information, the fact remains that effective ways for isolating and addressing the inappropriate behaviors of students, especially special education students, need to be sought.

Recommendations

An analysis of the data suggested that special education students are referred for discipline more often than regular education students. The following recommendations were made as a result of this study:

1. That replication of this study be administered with other populations;
2. That replication of this study be administered to follow several groups of students in a longitudinal study;
3. That a study be made in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System in order to evaluate the effects teacher attitudes toward special education students have in regard to discipline referrals;
4. That intervention programs be established at the individual school level for special education students, especially boys, to address appropriate behavior;
5. That the implications of this study be made available to teacher institutions and to public schools for further research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Director of Schools' Permission Form

Mr. David E. Baker
Director of Schools
Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
501 Franklin Street
Clarksville, Tennessee 37040

Dear Mr. Baker:

I am currently enrolled in an educational research class at Austin Peay State University. The design of the class is a seminar /practicum format. The practicum will involve producing a Field Study of independent research within the educational setting of the school system. This is the final requirement in obtaining my Ed.S. degree in Administration and Supervision.

The research I plan to conduct involves analysis of student discipline referrals for two years at Richview Middle School. No student names will be used in the study and complete confidentiality will be maintained at all times. This will simply be a period of gathering statistical data for analysis in my study.

My documentation would begin immediately and would take approximately two months. I have already contacted Mr. Joe E. Williams and have received his consent and cooperation with this.

This study should provide me with a valuable learning experience while making a contribution to the school system and the field of educational knowledge. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me.

Sincerely,

William C. Winters
Principal
Kenwood Middle School

Appendix B
Discipline Referral Form

CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY
SCHOOL SYSTEM

DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

Date _____ Time _____ Offense _____

Description of the incident _____

Witnessed by: _____

Previous actions by teacher to modify behavior

1. _____ Date: _____
2. _____ Date: _____
3. _____ Date: _____
4. _____ Date: _____

Action taken by Administrator:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Sent Copy to Parent Yes _____ No _____

PARENT: If you have further questions please contact the school.

Teacher's Signature Parent's Signature Administrator's Signature