FROM EXPULSION TO SUCCESS: PERCEPTIONS OF EXPELLED STUDENTS

ABOUT THEIR EXPULSION PROCESS AND RESUMPTION OF EDUCATION

by

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Boise State University

December 2012

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the dissertation submitted by

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Dissertation Title: From Expulsion to Success: Perceptions of Expelled Students About Their Expulsion Process and Resumption of Education

Date of Final Oral Examination: 02 May 2012

The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student Julie Slocum Dahlgren, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Step-daughter Dr. Heidi Lane: always a model as you juggle career

And motherhood, welcoming my questions when I was unclear.

Jack & Diana Slocum, Beth Slocum, and Leatha Dahlgren passed away;

Your spirits guide me to reflect upon and appreciate each day.

Dear husband, Dick Dahlgren, you have been a fantastic good sport:

A rock of patience, humor, gentleness, and constant support.

ABSTRACT

From Expulsion to Success: Perceptions of Expelled Students About Their
Expulsion Process and Resumption of Education

Julie Slocum Dahlgren

This mixed-methods study examined expelled students in a Northwest public school district of 3,400 students. The purpose was to analyze perceptions of expelled students from 2003-2010 (N-68) regarding their expulsion process and experiences relating to the resumption of educational pursuits. Data was collected from a questionnaire designed by the researcher and distributed to 44 students and from transcribed and coded testimony from four students. The research centers on the whys and wherefores of student expulsions, asking questions that could help schools and school districts penetrate more deeply into the expulsion process, questions that focus on how students perceive their own expulsion and how, after expulsion, they do or do not resume their education. Results from findings using descriptive statistics and qualitative interviewing and coding procedures show five significant areas. Expelled students (1) express deep feeling of isolation after expulsion, (2) feel their expulsions were unfair, but support zero tolerance policies for weapons and drug abuses even though the majority reason for expulsion is drug offenses, (3) express a need for their district to help them, not exclude them, (4) resume educational pursuits at a ratio of 75% graduation at various schools to 25% who dropped out, and (5) parents, especially mothers, are the main influential mentors in the resumption of education.

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PROLOGUE

Astonishment came when I, a newly elected school board trustee, had to join my fellow board members and come to a decision: do we expel this student or not? This was a first for me. I was not prepared. No one told me what criteria should guide my decision. No one asked me to consider how my decision would affect this student's family, the community, the other students, or, indeed, the student herself. On the other hand, the superintendent's office told me the district had certain policies I should follow, policies that were decided upon in the light of state and federal laws that made it difficult to exercise the kind of common sense that every good judge makes when he decides that, in the special circumstances before him, he can and must make an exception to the general law. Some school districts, I was told, had a hard-and-fast rule: one strike and you're out, often called "a zero tolerance" policy. My school district had nothing in writing to indicate it was following this zero tolerance rule, but, in past recent practice, it seemed to go along with the underlying assumption beneath zero tolerance policies: follow the safer course—safer for the district at least, and often safer for the community. The rule was, when there's any doubt, expel the student. I found little or no consideration of, or even conversation about, the long-term future of the student whose case was before the board.

In 2009, I had completed a pilot study of school board trustees that confirmed that other trustees were as unprepared as I was to make these decisions, to expel or not to expel a wayward youngster (Dahlgren, 2010; Appendix K). Admitting their lack of preparation, these trustees went ahead and expelled the student anyway, basing their

action on two criteria: 1) school district policies, and 2) the urgings of the school administration. I wondered how well they understood the consequences of their actions. I wondered if they had any way of knowing, or were encouraged to care, how the students felt. Did getting expelled help the students or hurt them? I wondered if seeing the expelled students' point of view would help administrators and trustees make more informed, even more compassionate decisions.

My own first expulsion case involved a ninth-grade girl who admitted she had been using and distributing drugs. I simply went along with the recommendations of the superintendent's office and voted with the other trustees to expel this young woman for a year. We made this decision out of a certain amount of ignorance. We did not know if or how her parents were going to help her during this crucial year, we did not know if she could get into some kind of alternate study program, we did not know how this setback would influence her and her parents' decision to return to school. As it turned out, the father, who had not been paying much attention to his daughter, went through an initial angry stage, blaming the school district for not giving his daughter what perhaps some might imagine he should have been giving. Once he got over his anger, he realized he had an important role to play in his daughter's growth, and seized it. The girl entered a rehab program and took a few online classes for credit recovery, worked in a local deli sandwich shop, and then returned to school in our district, more grown up for the experience. She graduated from high school a year later than her original class. But she did graduate and enrolled in a vocational college in a nearby city.

As it turned out, our decision to expel this young woman was a good one, though done more in ignorance and hope than anything else. Her parents began to take more

responsibility for her, and she started taking more responsibility for herself. The board of trustees expelled her and she grew up. That was the long and the short of the story in this case. However, I kept wondering if we could have recommended other alternatives—and I turned my wonder into this dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

There were a number of other school-shootings in the United States before Columbine. But after the notoriety and the huge media coverage of the Columbine case, when two teenagers shot and killed 14 of their classmates and a teacher in Littleton, Colorado in April 1999, and then killed themselves, school districts started paying closer attention to the task of providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all students. Across the nation, many weighed in with new ways of building this environment. Chief among them: a zero tolerance policy—which meant in most cases "one strike and you're out."

Once school districts began using zero tolerance, however, some educators began to question its strict application. Some researchers and policy makers now say the national reaction to Columbine may have gone too far. Skiba and Rausch (2006) suggest that "schools with higher rates of school suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate, less satisfactory school governance structures, and to spend a disproportionate amount of time on disciplinary matters" (p. 1065). An American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force report stated, "Recent research indicates a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status" (American Psychologist, 2008, p. 83).

A 2009 position paper by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction seemed to agree with the APA Task Force. It noted efforts to restore some balance between hard-and-fast zero tolerance policies by minimizing the number of expulsions, a strategy that serves to keep students who might have been expelled connected to school and in a learning environment (*Alternatives to Expulsion*, 2009). While this Wisconsin report pointed to the good results of the zero tolerance policy when it was able to curtail an offending student's behavior and "to provide a safer, more positive learning atmosphere for other students," it also noted that policy's drawbacks (p. v). "All too often, expelled students do not obtain a high school diploma, have few or no job skills, do not become contributing citizens, and instead, become part of the justice system" (*Alternatives to Expulsion*, 2009, p. v).

Both the APA Task Force study and the Wisconsin study reflect a growing concern that zero-tolerance policies have been applied too woodenly. This is not a new worry. More than a decade ago, Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1999) cited a study from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that reflected the same concern. School violence, they pointed out, had remained stable over a 20-year period, while schools and school districts across the nation were mandating "harsher consequences for both major and minor violations" (p. 373). Skiba, Eckes, and Brown (2009) concluded in their law review article that an estimated 3.1 million, or approximately 7% of the U.S. student population, missed at least one day of school due to out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Skiba et al. (2009) argue that such widespread use of disciplinary exclusion "raises thorny questions for schools and administrators"—among these questions (really

more of a charge than a question): they "remove students from the opportunity to learn" (p. 1089).

Remove students from the opportunity to learn? What could be more antithetical to a school's primary mission? In one of his earliest works, John Dewey (1897) proclaimed, "The purpose of education should not revolve around the acquisition of a pre-determined set of skills, but rather the realization of one's full potential and the ability to use those skills for the greater good" (p. 5). He notes that "to prepare him [the student] for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities for the greater good" (p. 6). Dewey never lost sight of that goal. School administrators and district board members might consider incorporating Dewey's goal in their decisions about excluding students.

Purpose of the Study

The history of the Columbine shootings, the reaction and counter-reaction to them, underlines the relevance of this study. The research centers on the whys and wherefores of student expulsions, asking questions that will help schools and school districts penetrate more deeply into the expulsion process, questions that focus on how students perceive their own expulsion and how, after expulsion, they do or do not resume their education. It also provides a definition of the terms used in this study, outlines its delimitations and limitations, and reports on the measures taken to address them.

Furthermore, this study is an attempt to help administrators and trustees examine alternative options that may be available to them when they enter an expulsion hearing. It focuses on one long-ignored factor: the voices of the young men and young women who have been expelled. More specifically, this study asks what students who have been

expelled think about the expulsion process? And, maybe more importantly, since students often have difficulty separating their thoughts and their feelings, how do they feel about it? And how did they judge its outcome? That is, did being expelled hurt them or did it help them? Help them do what? Educators have always given at least a single implicit answer to this question: to help them grow. John Dewey (1897) gave an explicit answer when he wrote, "Education is oriented toward growth" (p. 7).

When students of every kind, young people who have been expelled, and their peers who have not been expelled, ask themselves, "Why am I going to school at all?" they must respond with an answer that bears on their very identity as human beings, and their aspirations for their future. If the expulsion experience compels students who have been expelled to ask this basic question ("Why are we in school?") and answer it ("To grow."), then that experience alone will endow it with continuing value.

One lesser, but no less pertinent, inquiry: what was there about the expulsion process, if anything, that helped the expelled students continue their educational pursuits? Board members and school districts would like to think that what they are doing, bringing out the best in their students, has a lasting effect on the public order, and the nation's common good, which the 13th century medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas, and the 20th century theologian, John Courtney Murray, defined as "a smoothly functioning society" (Murray, 2005, p. 5). If young people do not pursue their education, as Skiba et al. (1999) suggest, they often end up flipping hamburgers at McDonalds, or perhaps doing so in prison, which may not be what the theologians had in mind when they were putting up the common good as something that all communities ought to strive for.

Horace Mann (1796-1859), the father of public schools in the U.S., argued that all

citizens, regardless of race or economic status, should have equal access to a tuition-free, tax-supported public school system (Cremin, 1980, p. 4). Such a system must be responsive to all races and all religions if society is to achieve the unshackled status of a true democracy. He put his ideas in action by his efforts as a legislator in Massachusetts and then as the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education to establish free, public, non-sectarian education for every man and woman (Ritchie, 2009). Cremin (1980) mentions that in this cause, he succeeded in raising public and private support for public schools, doubled teachers' wages, and, in 1839, in Lexington, Mass., established the nation's first normal school. He extended his influence beyond Massachusetts with his editorship of The Common School Journal where he wrote one annual report that advocated private support from the business community for public education. In 1846, he asserted that education was a natural right for every child, and that the state had a responsibility to provide education for every child. This advocacy led to the adoption in 1852 of the first State law requiring compulsory school attendance. In 1848, he presented a rationale for the support of public education through taxation: "Society itself improves as a result," he said, "of an educated public" (Ritchie, 2009). The common good was not far from Mann's life-long concern for education.

John Dewey (1859-1952) followed in Mann's footsteps. Festenstein (2008) suggested that for Dewey freedom consisted not merely in the absence of external constraints but by participation in an ethically desirable social order. "Men are not isolated non-social atoms, but are men only when in intrinsic relations to one another, and the state in turn only represents them so far as they have become organically related to one another, or are possessed of unity of purpose and interest" (Dewey, 1938, p. 87).

This study intends to make the connection between Mann's "universal schooling for all" and Dewey's insistence on its rationale, "for the common good," with something far less grand, but no less important: the careful attention to a long-marginalized group of students, those who, for one reason or another, run afoul of a school district's policies on expulsion. The ongoing education of these students also contributes to Murray's "smoothly functioning society."

Research Questions

This study proposes to ask two questions:

1. What are the perceptions of expelled students about their expulsion process?

2. What are the perceptions of expelled students about resuming their educational pursuits?

In both of these inquiries, I looked for patterns in every student's story. Why did they drop out? Or, alternatively, why did they resume some form of education? In addition to the satisfaction of learning more about a little-researched area, getting the answers to these questions turned out to be one of the gratifying aspects of this research.

Definitions

Before proceeding with the substance of the argument, it will be helpful to define the terms used in this study.

<u>Dropout</u>

A dropout is a student who has not completed high school and is not enrolled. However, dropout figures are difficult to find because most states do not adequately collect or analyze data. States have different definitions for dropout. For example,

students who leave school are not counted as having dropped out if they enroll in adult education classes, like night school, or enroll in a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program. Students who go to prison are not counted. Mishel and Roy (2006) report that in 2005, the National Governors Association announced that 45 states had agreed to develop voluntary "common measures" for reporting high school graduation rates (p. 292). That did not get at the problem of counting dropouts. It is a faulty assumption that if a school has an 80 percent graduation rate, its dropout rate is 20 percent. The U.S. Department of Education requires that every year states must count the number of students who enter ninth grade. If they do not graduate in four years, they are counted as dropouts. But it is not clear how many states are actually doing this. Many states, like Idaho, still do not have a system capable of tracking a student through four years of high school. There has been so little pressure on states to gather and report accurate dropout data that researchers at Northeastern University in Boston have concluded that dropout data in 26 states are unreliable and unstable (*Left behind in America, 2009)*. A few states like Texas, California, and Florida have created a common identifier, a tracking number, that helps schools confirm whether a student has re-enrolled after transferring to another school in the same state. This common identifier is viewed as the most promising approach to gathering accurate dropout data (*Left behind in America*, 2009). Idaho's longitudinal data systems rank at the bottom of all states and will not report a cohort rate for the first time until 2013-14 and will not use it for accountability until 2014-15 (Zubrzycki, 2012).

Expulsion

        Expulsion is banishment from school, even from the school grounds, for a period of time that could last one calendar year. The student is forbidden entry to any of the district's properties, subject to charges of criminal trespass. Regular education students receive no educational services during their period of expulsion; special education students receive supplemental services, such as home instruction. Expelled students are removed from school grounds because of an infraction such as drug distribution, weapon violation, assault on staff, or sexual harassment. Generally, students must be warned before they can be expelled, with each school stating its own, often complicated process, to ensure that the process itself is carried out fairly in accordance with the rights of both the student and the school (*Answers to frequently asked school discipline questions,* 2009, pp. 6-9).

GED (General Educational Development)

        This often is referred to as the General Education Diploma or the General Equivalency Diploma. It is a widely recognized form of alternative secondary certification based on an eight-hour subject-based test (writing, social studies, science, reading, and mathematics). Although the requirements for certification are notably different from traditional high school diplomas, the GED is viewed as the functional equivalent of the high school diploma. Smith (2003) researched employer surveys and concluded that employers generally consider the GED equivalent to the traditional high school diploma in hiring decisions, but added that much of the literature on the economic returns to GED attainment indicate that these returns are significantly below those of traditional high school graduates and not much higher than those of other dropouts.

Heckman, Humphries, and Mader (2011) suggested that the GED testing program distorts

social statistics on high school completion rates, minority graduation gaps, and sources of

wage growth. Heckman et al. (2011) also reported that because the GED is available and

low cost, it induces some students to drop out of school. Only individuals who have not

earned a high school diploma may take the GED tests. The GED test is used by all 50

U.S. states, the District of Columbia, U.S. insular areas, Canadian provinces and

territories, the U.S. military, and federal correctional institutions. According an

American Council on Education March 2011 press release, nearly 800,000 GED Tests are

taken each year and a more rigorous GED test aligned with Common Core State

standards is being designed to ensure career and college readiness (American Council on

Education, 2011). Tests and test preparation are routinely offered in prisons and on

military bases in addition to more traditional settings of adult-education centers,

community colleges, and public schools.

GFSA (Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994)

The Gun-Free School Act of 1994 (GFSA), (Pub. L. 103-382, Title 1, δ 101.

October 20, 1994, 198 Stat. 3907) declares that any state receiving federal funds under

ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Public Law 103-382) must

have a state law requiring local public school districts to expel from school for a period of

not less than one year a student who is determined to have brought a weapon to school.

Each state's law also allows the chief administration officer of the district to modify the

expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis. The term "weapon" in the Gun-Free

Schools Act refers to a firearm and is defined by federal law (Section 921 of Title 18 of

the U.S. Code) as:

…(A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer, of (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm." This definition does not include knives. However, school districts may enact broader policies if they desire.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

An In-School Suspension (ISS) is a leave assigned to a student as a form of punishment during which the students attends school in a monitored classroom within the regular school setting. The student does not socialize with other students, attend regular classes, or participate in school activities. The suspension may last a few days or weeks, depending on the student's offense, and the student may be warned that future offenses could result in additional suspension or expulsion. For the length of the suspension, the student reports for classes in the suspension room, and he or she is expected to complete homework assignments, work on projects, and show up for class (*In School Suspension*, 2011).

NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) or the Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

NCLB was enacted 8 January 2002 to expand choices for parents, focus resources on proven educational methods, and provide accountability for results (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2008)). This federal law has dominated education circles during the last decade through its mandates for programs aiming at

improving U. S. education in elementary, middle, and high schools by increasing accountability standards. The underlying theory is that high expectations' goal setting will result in greater educational achievement for most students. Supporters believe that test results will improve the quality of public education for all and further democratize U.S. education by setting standards and providing resources to schools, regardless of wealth, ethnicity, disabilities, or language spoken. The law has been extended but not officially reauthorized. Debate on its reauthorization include using data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction instead of penalizing schools for below par test scores. Dillon (2010) adds other considerations such as using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools, attracting and keeping highly qualified teachers, and demonstrating and sustaining education reform are other considerations in its potential reauthorization.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

An Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) is a mandatory leave assigned to a student as a form of punishment in accordance with local school board policy. An operant definition is "the removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed ten days" (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron 2002, p. 259). OSS succeeds in its short-term objective of removing a problematic student from school and stalls, or perhaps, prevents any future serious misbehavior. During the suspension, students are not permitted to visit their campus. It is often a step that intervenes between a discipline action and a formal expulsion hearing giving the student and administration time to prepare their cases.

Restorative Justice

  McCold (2009) says crime is more than a breaking of the law; it also harms people, relationships, and the community. A just response could address those harms as well. Those who have committed crimes may, if they are willing, meet with their victims to discuss the harm they have caused, and come to some agreed-upon resolution. Other approaches are available if the law-breakers or their victims are unable or unwilling to meet. Sometimes those meetings lead to transformational changes in offenders' lives (McCold, 2009; Restorative Justice Community Action, 2011).

Zero Tolerance

  Zero tolerance policies as defined by the U.S. Department of Education are disciplinary rules that mandate predetermined consequences or punishments for specific outcomes (Potts, Njie, Detch, & Walton, 2003). A fuller treatment of zero tolerance will be presented in Chapter 2.

Delimitations and Limitations

  In the field of social science research, delimitation is a process by which researchers try to narrow down their focus, something obviously within their control. Limitation refers to factors that researchers cannot control.

Delimitations

  I looked at a total of 68 students who had been expelled from a school district in a town in the Northwest, over a seven-year period, from 2003 to 2010, and, for reasons beyond my control, narrowed the study down to 44. Eighteen responded to the survey and three (one expelled twice) agreed to semi-structured interviews. Interviewing only four

out of sixty-eight (18/68) may lead one to conclude I was merely taking a short cut. I was

not. There were extrinsic factors that stopped me from interviewing all sixty-eight, and

even more extrinsic factors that dictated a much smaller sample for the in-depth

interviews. For the convenience of the older students in the cohort, many of whom were

living away from the area, but visiting home for the holidays, it was decided to limit face-

to-face interviews to the Christmas vacation period.

<u>Limitations</u>

The expulsion process is, by law, confidential and inaccessible. No one takes

minutes during student expulsion hearings, and boards make limited reports on the results

of those hearings. In reporting their decisions to expel and the terms of the expulsion,

they never release the names of those expelled. Any researcher asking to see the records

is told these files are sealed. This made it impossible to document or triangulate

theoretically comparable data.

Such a small sample may yield results that cannot be generalized (Glesne, 1999).

This study was undertaken in a public school district of 3,400 students. There were

factors that do not and cannot apply in a large urban district ten or one hudred times the

size of this Northwest district. Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000), therefore, the

study's findings may not generalize to larger populations of expellees who do not share

similar demographic characteristics. Disciplinary and expulsion issues may, and do,

differ in urban and suburban areas as well as in different geographical areas with different

demographics. For example, Clark County School District serving the Las Vegas Area

has a dedicated superintendent and department for providing instruction and related

services to nearly 50,000 expelled and suspended students who may have experienced

challenges in comprehensive school settings. This includes 25 alternative schools and a variety of counseling and instructional programs (Clark County School District, 2011). The district selected for this study does not have a dedicated department to handle district-wide discipline issues, has one alternative high school, and conducts approximately ten expulsions per year.

Adherence to standards set by the Boise State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) refined the sample. Former students who were incarcerated could not be interviewed or used as participants in the study. The 44 potential subjects received letters of explanation, consent forms to sign, and were provided with university rules to assure students their interviews would remain confidential. Taking these rules to heart, 18 of them simply chose not to sign these consent forms. Eighteen of the subjects were told they could stop the process any time they felt discomfort or threatened, and four of them chose to do that, once they felt ill-at-ease. Already stigmatized by their expulsions, they chose not to revisit the event. The explanatory letters were couched in almost threatening terms; the rules, dictated by university policies on human-subject research, were toughly worded.

A significant amount of time had passed since expulsion had taken place. The memories of those who did agree to the survey might well have been sharper and more detailed if the study had taken place earlier.

A third inhibiting factor was my position as a school board trustee who had participated in the hearings of some of the potential participants. I did take measures to ensure a certain objectivity and considered myself "a translator of culture" using member checks, reflective commentary, and peer scrutiny (Glesne, 1999, p. 156; Shenton, 2004,

pp. 66-67). However, it is possible that my past experience as both a teacher who was familiar with some of the participants and as a trustee who had served as a judge in their cases may have affected my role in conducting the research. But how? One could make the case that those positions as either a former teacher or a member of the school board may have given some assurance to the participants. They knew the person asking these questions was not a stranger. One could conclude that the participants who finally agreed to the interviews, by the very fact of their agreement, knew and trusted me.

Once I understood the delimitations and limitations of the research, I could proceed to review the literature—the knowledge up to this point that had been gathered on student expulsions. By examining the gaps in that knowledge, I could proceed in my own research to fill in the gaps.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter reviews the literature on student expulsions in five areas: 1) the history of school board authority, 2) criteria that trustees use to make their expulsion decisions, 3) the effect of expulsion policies on all concerned, 4) alternative options undertaken by students who were expelled, and 5) students' voices in the expulsion process. In all five areas, in keeping with the original aim of this study, I focused on what the literature revealed about the entire expulsion experience, then followed up with a closer focus on what the literature reported about student reactions to being expelled, and, finally, how students managed to resume, or not resume, their education pursuits.

Evolution of School Board Authority

Public school board policy on expulsions has changed over time, as, indeed, the entire enterprise of education has changed. Educators have begun to "authorize student perspectives" by creating legitimate and valued spaces where students can speak–and where teachers can listen. With his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970), an influential theorist of critical pedagogy, emerged as an early proponent of giving students a voice in their own education. Cook-Sather (2002) asserts that giving students this voice helps teachers; it makes what they teach more understandable to their students. It helps students; it makes them feel more empowered and more motivated to participate constructively in their own education. In this literature review, I made a particular effort

to see who was making decisions about the expulsion process during the course of school history in the United States, and to ask whether and how student perspectives had any influence on administrators and/or board members during and after the expulsion process. I also made it a point to ask whether and how in four successive moments in the nation's history educators paid any attention to giving students a voice in their own education.

1640-1770

Cremin (1970), an education historian, writes that early American colonists tried at first to educate by the traditional English methods of family, church, community, and apprenticeship, with schools later becoming the key agent in socialization. At first, the rudiments of literacy and arithmetic were taught inside the family, assuming the parents had those skills. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the role of the schools had expanded to such an extent that many of the educational tasks traditionally handled by parents became the responsibility of the school Cremin (1970).

Small and Eddy (2009) detail more early history, claiming all the New England colonies required towns to set up schools, and many did so. In 1642, the Massachusetts Bay Colony made "proper" education compulsory; other New England colonies followed. Similar statutes were adopted in other colonies in the 1640s and 1650s. The schools were all male, with few facilities for girls. In the 18th century, "common schools" appeared: students of all ages were under the control of one teacher in one room. Although they were publicly supplied at the local (town) level, they were not free, and instead were supported by tuition or "rate bills." The larger towns in New England opened grammar schools, the forerunner of the modern high school. The most famous was the Boston

Latin School, which is still in operation as a public high school (Small & Eddy, 2009, pp. 513-531). By the 1780s, most had been replaced by private academies.

In pre-colonial and colonial America, local school boards made all the decisions, including, presumably, decisions to expel a student. The membership on those boards was, at first, naturally assumed by a town's Establishment figures, its mayors and merchants and preachers (Amundson, Ficklen, Moatsch, Saks, & Zokonyo, 1996). Soon, "the actual everyday governance of public schools was a grassroots affair conducted by locally elected trustees" (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 75). The literature makes no mention of expulsions in early American schools.

These local representatives were generally town officials who took on one or more of many necessary tasks. They gave school governance the time and the attention they could afford, perhaps never realizing how complex the task would become (Sewall, 1996). Callahan (1975) reports that Samuel Adams (1753) was arguing for the popular election of board members: this to stop the prevailing practice of local establishment figures setting school policies and, until communities started electing them, doing so unchallenged.

The founding of the new nation did not change the early pattern of school governance. According to Dahlkemper (1999), "The U.S. Constitution is silent about public education, and therefore the legal obligation for its provision falls to the states" (p. 6). And so, from colonial times, public education was conceived as a local affair.

The election of local boards spun off another early American institution: town hall meetings, which were established in the late 1770's. These elected boards oversaw many, if not all, of the managerial aspects of individual school districts. "In the beginning, they

controlled nearly every aspect of school administration, including collecting taxes, hiring

and managing teachers, managing facilities, and testing students" (Usdan, 2001, p. 2).

These boards found locations for classes, held school visitations, and located parents who

chose not to send their children to school (Amundson et al., 1996).

1770-1860

By the early 19th century, New England operated a network of elite private high

schools, now called "prep schools," typified by Phillips Andover Academy (1778),

Phillips Exeter Academy (1781), and Deerfield Academy (1797). They became the major

feeders for Ivy League colleges in the mid-19th century (Story, 1975; McLachlan, 1970;

Powell, 1998).

Generally, upper class parents hired tutors for the education of their children or

sent them to private schools. During the colonial years, some sent their sons to England

for schooling. In Virginia, rudimentary schooling for the poor and paupers was provided

by the local parish. Most parents either home schooled their children or relied on private

schools and tutors (Tyler, 1897). Tyler (1897) wrote that in the remote colony of Georgia

at least ten grammar schools were in operation by 1770, many taught by ministers (p. 4).

Most had some government funding. Many were free to both male and female students.

Historians Monaghan (1988) and Fatherly (2004) point out that reading and

writing were different skills in the colonial era. Schools taught both, but in places without

schools, reading was taught mainly to boys and a few privileged girls. Men handled

worldly affairs and needed to read and write. Girls only needed to read, especially

religious materials. This educational disparity between reading and writing explains why

the colonial women often could read, but could not write and could not sign their names—they used an "X" (Monaghan, 1988, p. 44).

<u>1865-1900</u>

After the Revolution, communities put more emphasis on education, especially in the northern states, which rapidly established public schools. By the year 1870, all states had free elementary schools. Literacy soared. "High literacy rates in America...exceeded 90 per cent in some regions" (Copeland, 2002, p. 141). Herbst (1996) wrote that private academies flourished in the towns across the country, but rural areas, where most people lived, had few schools before the 1880s. By the close of the 19th century, public secondary schools began to outnumber private schools.

Copeland (2002) singled out Georgia as having a high literacy rate in colonial times, but its early promise faded after 1800; the entire rural South had limited schooling during the post-bellum years until 1900 (p. 156). Copeland (2002) reported that southern states established public school systems under Reconstruction biracial governments but nearly all of the schools were segregated and black schools were consistently underfunded. High schools became available to whites and some blacks, in the cities after 1900, but few rural Southerners of either race went beyond the 8th grade until after 1945.

<u>1900-1950</u>

During this period, a new player affecting school board authority entered the scene: the school superintendent (Feuerstein, 2002). By the 1860s, the superintendents represented "a major power shift" in school governance (Feuerstein, 2002, p. 75). And, with that shift, it was even more true that the people at large were handing over the

educational enterprise to the experts, operating under the ancient mandate—to "plug

learners into bolted-down desks and lock-step curricula through which they were guided

by the teacher-as-skilled-engineer" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3).

Throughout the first part of the twentieth century, some school boards moved

into the practice of meeting periodically to set policy—leaving the day-to-day running of

the districts to their superintendents, who assumed duties that had up to then been carried

out by faculty and school administrators. "Many superintendents took on the role of

proselytizing for the common school, selecting vendors for school services, fighting

against political spoils systems, and deciding which principals and teachers would be

hired" (Glass, Bjork, & Grunner, 2000, p. 14). By the 1930s, many school districts were

taking a more structured approach to management, following the lead of Frederick

Taylor, known for his scientific management techniques, to boost efficiency. "A new

ideal" for school management was set forth urging that "smaller boards were to decide

policy and delegate administration to the superintendent and specialists" (Dahlkemper,

1999, p. 7). Superintendents began hiring specialists to help them run certain aspects of

their administration—specifically subject matter specialists as well as non-subject matter

specialists like school psychologists and nurses (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 75).

<u>1950-1970</u>

As board members' power was giving way to increasing control by the

superintendents, another set of players entered the scene: state departments of education,

delegated by state legislators to oversee the local school districts (Dahlkemper, 1999).

The State of Massachusetts actually led the way when it established a State Board of

Education in 1837, placing Horace Mann at its head. In 1971, Massachusetts Governor

Francis W. Sargent introduced legislation calling for a student representative to sit on the state board. "If we are to replace confrontation with deliberation and shouting with dialogue, youth must be invited in, not shut out. We have ... a climate where young and old can sit together, talk, and listen" (*How Did the SSAC Get Started?,* 2006, p. 1). The State of California set up its state board in 1921, and its legislature, which could provide funding, mandated the board pay special attention to the state's secondary schools (Haberman, 1999). North Carolina established its state board in 1942, Texas in 1949. But, according to the Education Commission of the States, it was not until the 1950s that a majority of the states had set up their state boards of education (Dahlkemper, 1999).

Some argued that legislators imposed these state mandates because school boards were unable to step up student achievement (Land, 2002). Cuban (2004) disagrees with Land; he feels that current reforms do little to advance student achievement: "[Reformers] take power away from local school boards and educators, the only people who can improve what happens in classrooms, and give it to distant officials, who have little capacity to achieve results" (Cuban, 2004, p. 104).

<u>1970-2012</u>

Given the current political reality and wide discussion about the true worth of local school boards, it is of ever increasing importance to ask how a school board chooses to spend its time. Chester E. Finn, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education in 1980, said that school boards are "dinosaurs left over from the agrarian past" (Kirst, 2004, p. 14). Cuban agrees with Kirst: "According to opinion polls, most communities trust their school boards to do the right thing"—where doing "the right thing" is defined by doing what the public wants (Cuban, 2004, p. 122).

But is this trust well-placed? Schlechty (2001) seems to say school boards could do more than follow the public consensus: "The true constituents of school boards of education are the community's children and its future rather than voters and present interests" (Schlechty, 2001, p. 210). Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) suggest to school leaders, including trustees, that it is a "moral imperative and practical necessity that a well functioning democracy provides for total inclusion of all of its citizens in the schooling process" (p. 7).

Consolidation

At the turn of the twentieth century, boards began a consolidation process (Feuerstein, 2002, p. 18). "In 1948, the U.S. counted some 89,000 school districts existing in this country. By 1953, the number had shrunk to 55,000, to 31,000 by 1961, and to 15,378 by 1991" (Amundson et al., 1996, p. 32). The trend continues. The reason: mainly to save money. A Michigan State University (MSU) study reported that Michigan has 550 public districts—and nearly that many superintendents, business managers, and transportation directors (Shakrani, 2010). Shakrani (2010) also stated there is "a lack of consensus on whether countywide consolidation itself affects student achievement and school climate" (p. 8). Writing a report off that study, Jesse, Murray and Reinstadler (2010) of the Booth Newspapers surmised:

> Trim that management layer, erase district boundaries and recast administration around county lines, and state taxpayers save $612 million a year after three years -- all without closing a school or losing one high school mascot--but forcing mergers on reluctant communities, or even getting school boards to agree to share services, is a political nightmare [proponents acknowledge].

School consolidation has been an ongoing march in the country since the early 20th century as communities moved from one-room schoolhouses to neighborhood

schools and community districts. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) documents the consolidation trend and reported in 2011 a membership of 90,000 trustees governing 13,809 local school districts, which serve the nation's 50 million public school students (*Merge*, 2011).

Like in other states, Idaho district consolidation is not a new concept. Guerber (1998) presented a report to the Idaho State Board of Education that summarized consolidation efforts. The state had approximately 1,082 school districts in 1940 when C.E. Roberts became State Superintendent. Roberts recommended reorganizing districts, but his recommendations were largely ignored. He went on to lead an organization called the Idaho Education Council in 1944, which continued to push the issue of consolidation. In 1947, the Legislature took action, requiring the State Department of Education to consolidate districts. The Department faced a difficult task. Asher B. Wilson, chairman of the State Board of Education, took it upon himself to reorganize districts. It took until 1961. By the end of 1947, 11 districts had been reorganized. By September 1950, the 1,082 districts had been reduced to 301. After 12 years, the program was finally considered complete, and the 1,082 school districts had been consolidated into 116, the approximate number today (Guerber, 1998, pp. 10-12).

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna, in 2010, presented to the legislature a feasibility study about consolidation under the auspices of saving the state millions of dollars. Currently, local school boards have the authority to consolidate with another district if both districts agree to it. Idaho Code 33-1003 allows districts to keep full cost savings of consolidation for seven years. Previous to this law, those savings would have all reverted to the state. In his blog, Luna (2010) reiterates that the savings

could be $15 million, but he does not support forced consolidation but rather encourages

districts to consolidate services such as payroll, special services, and technology. He did

not mention services for expelled and suspended students.

Federal Involvement

In 1954, the federal government, in an effort to create racial equality in the

nation's schools, started pouring federal dollars into local education, and it chose to do so

by funneling its funding to the states, money that ended up in state departments of

education (Land, 2002). Dahlkemper (1999), writing for the Education Commission for

the States, suggested this move was triggered by the United States Supreme Court ruling

in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* and was furthered with the passage of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. In October 1979, Congress created the

U.S. Department of Education. It was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter, and

began operating on May 16, 1980. "As the federal interest in education grew, so did

federally funded programs and the bureaucracies to oversee them" (Dahlkemper, 1999, p.

8).

With the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957, the U.S. Congress

decided that education was now vital to national security. It started pouring money into

education, particularly into science teaching. That, too, strengthened the grip of the

federal government in education (Howell, 2005, p. 11). This trend continued with the

issuance of a report from the National Commission of Education in 1983. The

commission report, *A Nation at Risk*, put American public education on a "reform

trajectory" (Kingsley, 2004). Frustration and public outcry followed, as a concern for

education continued to mount with the issuance in 1998 of scores from the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that "revealed little or no improvement in reading, math and science scores" (Broad, 2003, p. 5). *A Nation at Risk* gave the public a signal—that it should expect more from its school boards (Education Policy and Leadership Center, 2004; Broad, 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Timar & Tyack, 1999). In 1999, a citizens' commission stated that, "school boards focus the district's efforts on increasing student learning" (Dahlkemper, 1999, p. 32). In 2000, the National School Boards Association further verbalized its commitment to student achievement. It was, the NSBA said, "the key work of school boards" (Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2000, p. 1). That key work continues today.

With passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, the federal government gave state education departments, state legislatures, and local school boards two choices: 1) to forego the federal funding that accompanied the legislation, or 2) to pass federal mandates aiming at greater student achievement on to superintendents, principals, and teachers (Epstein, 2004, p. 2). Most school boards took the second option. "The vast majority of respondents reported that the percentage of board time spent on issues directly related to student achievement has increased during their board tenure" (Hess, 2010, p. 9). Seventy-three percent of the school board members included in Hess's research reported an increase of attention to achievement during their years as school board members. Hess's research corresponds with information from Wirth and Kirst (2001) who reported a shift in board-focus during the 1990s. Boards, they said, consciously sought to make student achievement their central concern.

But did that concern translate into higher test scores in reading, science and math? Some said it did not. The Education Policy and Leadership Center 2004 questioned the

effectiveness of that commitment. Their paper charged there was no scientific research that "draws direct connections between governance models and student achievement" (Kingsley, 2004, p. 18), even while boards were claiming they were committed to student achievement, and allocating resources to promote student achievement, with the stipulation that those receiving the new resources had to account for their use of allocated funds (Hess, 2010, pp. 15-19).

This review of school board research indicates that school boards are, indeed, trying to concentrate on student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) of Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) examined 27 studies since 1970 that included rigorous quantitative methods to assess the effect of school district leadership on student achievement. They analyzed more than two dozen studies covering more than 2,800 districts and 3.4 million students. Of the 27 studies examined, 14 had information about the relationship between district leadership and average student academic achievement. "In districts with higher levels of student achievement, the local board of education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 6). Given the results from this meta-analytic study, it would appear that the work of school boards matters a great deal. However, no definitive research can document the effectiveness of these school boards.

Phase II of Delgaradelle's Lighthouse Study (2008) gave some evidence that school boards do matter; in regard to student attainment and their mandates, boards can and do generate higher student achievement: "School boards in districts with a history of higher student achievement were significantly different in knowledge, beliefs and actions from the boards in the lower achieving districts" (Delgaradelle, 2008, p. 92). Earlier

studies from The Institute for Educational Leadership (2001) and Hess (2010) agreed with Delgaradelle (2008), but suggested that more research is needed to determine what boards do and to describe how their actions, or possible inactions, impact school effectiveness and, ultimately, the success or failure of our nation's children.

In none of these studies did the author find evidence that researchers examined the impact of a district's expulsion policies on student achievement. Arum (2003) gives a summary of how schools historically maintain discipline. The most common way was through corporal punishment, which has all but disappeared from the United States, although twenty states, including Idaho, still allow use of corporal punishment with parent notification before administering the paddling. Exclusion through detention, suspension, and expulsion are common means of discipline when a student breaks a school district's rules. The Education Development Center (2011) found that some schools have expanded their use of suspension and expulsion policies and practices—but that these higher expulsion rates may only indicate that the school district itself is struggling to maintain control, or, indeed, is unable to understand the difficulties facing its problem students (Suspension and Expulsion Policies and Practices, 2011, p. 2). These researchers have not yet placed expulsion policies high on their list of priorities. Neither, in fact, do school boards themselves put much time or effort on crafting expulsion policies that specifically address student achievement. Nor is there any evidence that school district administrators have put effort into helping school board members see the expulsion process as much more than a punitive undertaking, as this study will show in the next section of this dissertation.

Trustee Decision-Making in Expulsions

Previous research shows that school boards across the nation have adopted a policy called "leading for learning." I wondered whether and how boards have translated this "leading for learning" policy into action. How can trustees "lead for learning" when they are continually confronted with school officials demanding they approve the expulsion of a given student who is not behaving according to their standards? These administrators are asking trustees to spend as much as 25% of their time in expulsion hearings—while these trustees are also being enjoined to focus on other responsibilities—for example, elaborating new ways of ensuring student achievement. I found no studies that asked what part of society is improved by expelling a student. Expulsion decisions call for prudent decisions based on a balance of often conflicting factors: family dynamics, student safety, a need for tolerance, community values, the availability of counseling, substitute mentors; and, once a student has been expelled, accessibility to programs that guide the student back to schooling. One would hope to find some studies that show happier schools after their "trouble makers" were expelled. I found no such studies, or, in fact, any research on the elements that trustees should consider when they are making their decisions to expel a student.

The question, "How much time is spent in student hearings in relation to other duties?" was addressed in the Dahlgren (2010) study. Results showed that trustees spend the least amount of time (only 25%) on judicial duties, which include expulsion hearings. Trustees can, of course, find some guidance from the laws of their state. In some places, like the State of Oregon, and Clark County, Nevada, trustees do not need to face the burden of making expulsion decisions. School superintendents, administrative designees,

or appointed panels can make expulsion recommendations to the school board. Boards

must approve such recommendations.

Antecedents to Expulsion

According to Idaho law and the law in a majority of states:

The board of trustees may deny enrollment, or may deny attendance at any of its
schools by expulsion to any pupil who is an habitual truant, or who is incorrigible,
or whose conduct, in the judgment of the board, is such as to be continuously
disruptive of school discipline, or to the instructional effectiveness of the school,
or whose presence in a public school is detrimental to the health and safety of
other pupils, or who has been expelled from another school district in this state or
any other state. (*Idaho Code* § 33-205)

The same code continues with readmission statements.

Any student having been denied enrollment may be enrolled or readmitted to the
school by the board of trustees upon such reasonable conditions as may be
prescribed by the board; but such enrollment or readmission shall not prevent the
board from again expelling such student for cause. (*Idaho Code* § 33-205)

The most common antecedents to expulsion as reported by trustees in order of

frequency are: violence and harassment; violations of district drug, alcohol, or

tobacco policies; weapons violations of the Gun-Free Schools Act; excessive

truancies; cumulative disciplinary record; and gang activity (Dahlgren, 2010, p. 22).

Excessive truancy as mentioned in *Idaho Code* § 33-205 is a common reason

to expel.

An habitual truant is: (a) any public school pupil who, in the judgment of the
board of trustees, or the board's designee, repeatedly has violated the
attendance regulations established by the board; or (b) Any child whose
parents or guardians, or any of them, have failed or refused to cause such
child to be instructed as provided in section 33-202 Idaho Code. (Idaho Code
33-206)

Since state money is allocated to a school or a school district based on average

daily attendance figures (ADA), one might think administrators would do everything

they could to keep the student in school. Furthermore, administrators might think that keeping a student in school might benefit the student's education. When administrators use poor attendance as an expelling cause, they could reason to this: that students who are habitually truant will fall so far behind that they will not be able to pass their courses. This, of course, is an assumption. I found no evidence in the literature that challenges, or does not challenge, that assumption. Rather, the literature shows that policy makers assume that the benefits of education are linked to the actual number of hours that students spend in the classroom.

This linking of time with education stems from a generally accepted belief, suggested by McLaren (2003), that students need practice at "regular attendance" to become reliable workers in business and industry. One critical theorist argues that schools generally affirm and reward students who exhibit the elaborately coded "middle-class" speech and behaviors like good attendance (McLaren, 2003, p. 219). This suggests that practicing regular attendance and being punctual are more part of the hidden curriculum imposed by hegemony of the white middle-class staff and leaders. Apple (2006) writes of a tension between "market values" and "traditional values." He suggests that Western society is falling apart, in part because schools do not do either of these. "They are too state-controlled, and they do not mandate what they are 'supposed' to teach" (p. 21). The dissonance in values is created by educators and parents who want equitable public schools and those whose preference is for advantaged educational circumstances, such as a traditional curriculum, where middle and upper class students can establish measurable superiority. With increasingly diverse populations attending

schools, dissonant values could be contributing to expulsion and dropout rates because a student's own values are not accepted or valued.

Diane Ravitch gave a speech to a school reform symposium in 2001 that drew educators, including teachers, trustees, administrators, and superintendents from across the state of Michigan. Her talk triggered a headline in the Grand Rapids Press on March 7, 2001: "Corporate-driven school reforms are part of 'an age of national stupidity.'" Other excerpts from that speech are:

- "The country can't improve schools by constantly cutting budgets and using standardized tests to paint teachers as ineffective in an attempt to "de-professionalize" the work."
- "Reform talk comes as schools are cutting budgets by eliminating pre-kindergarten classes, laying off teachers, trimming arts and physical education and boosting class sizes."
- "Little has been done to target [what she believes to be] the true problems facing schools: poverty and family support. The problem is poverty, not bad teachers."
- "People think I want to preserve the status quo. The truth is that I hate the status quo. No Child Left Behind is the status quo." (Murray 2011)

One decade later, Ravitch is even more strident with the same message. In her latest book, *American School System: How testing and choice are undermining education* (2010), she continues to challenge mainstream thinking, especially ideas from privileged non-educators such as the Gates, Broad, and Wallace Family Foundations who are currently funding reform movements. "Billionaire Boys Club" is her moniker for these groups, which she feels are dictating education policy through philanthropy (p. 195).

Whether truancy courts are an example of the influence of corporate America on expulsion and suspension policies, or of local Establishments who have bought into the hidden agenda imposed by hegemony of the white middle-class staff and leaders, Kingsley (2004) reports that judges in a few communities have been

successful in getting truants to resume attendance and schooling. Kingsley (2004) suggests many models exist, but generally a judge talks with students individually and then meets with a team that includes the parents, a member of the juvenile office, and representatives from the school. The district judge seeks reasons why the students are not going to school or doing their homework. Parents are held accountable for not getting their student to school and sometimes issued fines for not supervising their child.

Some expulsions are mandated by law. In 1994, for example, to bolster safety and ensure orderly learning environments, Congress passed the Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) requiring states receiving federal funds mandate a one year expulsion for any student who brought a gun to school (Ewing, 2000; First, 2000). This legislation served as the cornerstone for contemporary zero tolerance policies, which denote that severe instances of student violence and/or misbehavior would result in severe consequences such as suspension or expulsion for the student. Idaho, following the GFSA requirements, enacted *Idaho Code* § 33-205, which required boards to expel a student who has been found to have carried a weapon or firearm on school property in this state or any other state for a period of not less than one (1) year, twelve (12) calendar months.

Decision-Making Styles

Three studies conducted on trustees and their decision-making processes (Dahlgren, 2010; Nylander, 2007; Abeyta, 1998) revealed divergent approaches in the judicial process leading to expulsion. Why only three? I found several studies on

leadership strategies that were not related to a trustee's judicial responsibilities so excluded them.

Dahlgren (2010) surveyed 561 trustees in 115 school districts with specific questions that asked how trustees make decisions, especially in expulsion situations. Of the 225 who responded, 68% (44% of 561) said a decision to expel a student was the most difficult thing they had to do (Dahlgren, 2010, p. 24). Only 36.8% of the sample felt they were adequately prepared to make that decision. In other words, almost two-thirds of the trustees said they did not have adequate training or background to make such a serious judgment.

Trustees revealed more when they reported how they made their decisions. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of them said that, when they were uncertain, they voted with, or most often with, the majority. Cao, Han, and Hirshleifer (2011) researched group dynamics and suggest that when members of a group do not really know what to do, they "go along to get along" and never mind other factors (p. 1420). Economists call this phenomenon "the cascade effect" (Cao, Han, & Hirshleifer, 2011, p. 1421). According to Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, and Welch (1992) information cascades can quickly form when people decide to ignore their personal information signals and follow the behavior of others, particularly when they are asked to decide on the basis of very little information. Easley and Kleinberg (2010) give an example: "You decide on some personal information that you would like to dine at restaurant A. But when you arrive at restaurant A, you find it empty—while restaurant B next door is crowded. You scrap your plan to visit restaurant A and choose restaurant B instead, on the assumption that all these people in restaurant B know more than you know" (p. 483). These authors point out how

often people act on this "herd instinct" in "a nearly limitless set of situations in which people are influenced by others: in the opinions they hold, the products they buy, the political positions they support, the activities they pursue, [and] the technologies they use" (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010, p. 427).

Mullen and Roth (2001) reported a tendency on the part of many to go along with the majority, even when the majority may be making decisions that are not fair. Even highly respected individuals with little or nothing to fear by deviating from the group are prone to go along with majority opinion.

"Making decisions is like speaking prose, people do it all the time, knowingly, and unknowingly" (Kahneman & Tversky, 1986). Decision-making as a field of theory began to emerge in its own right in the 1960s (Arkes & Hammond, 1986). Their study said that decision-making encompasses "all aspects of a decision, from problem recognition to decision evaluation" (Arkes & Hammond, 1986, p. 3). I found that definition too broad and too vague because it hardly reflects the complex factors that go into making such decisions especially when decisions are made according to no value system except the decision maker's own predilections. Mann's (1976) descriptive theory defined a trustee representative as a person who makes decisions based on his/her personal judgment and professional experience. The trustee does what the trustee thinks is best for children, community, clientele, and constituents (Mann, 1976, p. 15). A previous study by Goldhammer (1964) suggested that board members believe they represent the community as a whole. In actuality, wrote Goldhammer, they represent only that segment of the community that shares and approves their values.

Nearly 100 years ago, John Dewey set the model for rational decision-making steps: 1) diagnosing the problem, 2) collecting data about it, 3) generating alternatives, 4) analyzing each alternative, 5) determining the consequences of each alternative, and 6) evaluating the consequences of the final decision (Dewey, 1910).

Researchers say it is difficult to determine whether and how board members follow Dewey's formula. Much depends on how board members' picture their schools. Some see schools as factories, some as cathedrals, some as families, some as jungles (Bolman & Deal, 1994). It is not hard to see how trustees who see their districts as jungles make decisions on one principle: survival of the fittest.

Deal collaborated with Danzberger (1994) to point out that school boards--all too commonly—see no need for special training in decision making (Danzberger & Deal, 1994). By contrast, trustees in the Dahlgren study (2010) showed a high regard for the training that the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) designs and facilitates through its annual conventions, new board member workshops, *Slate—*the bimonthly ISBA journal-individualized training sessions, and web-based classes. However, ISBA has so far offered no sessions for decision-making in student expulsions, an omission that implies the ISBA deems judicial responsibilities less important than executive and legislative roles (Dahlgren, 2010, p. 24).

Abeyta (1998) addressed decision-making when he profiled a group of New Mexico public school board members, asking them, among things, how these board members perceived their roles. He, like Danzberger (1994), suggested that school boards are creatures of the state, controlled by codes and statutory mandates. "Their roles have been confused from providing a direction for education based on community values and

the community's demographic population to micromanaging and legitimizing the policies that had been created in a different time based on values from outside influence" (Abeyta 1998, p. 169). His term "demographic" refers to various cohorts that public opinion researchers often use—e.g., education level, age, ethnicity, and income.

Dahlgren (2010) discovered that trustees based their decisions on four "beliefs": 1) what is best for the student, 2) what is best for the school, 3) what the law says, and 4) what the school principal, and what the school resource officer report. But when it came down to saying what influenced them the most, the trustees leaned heavily on "school district policies" (74.7%) and the "administration's facts and findings" (67.2%). They pointed to two lesser influences: "personal judgment and experience" (43.1 %), and "student circumstances" (30.8%).

Nylander (2007) surveyed 2,000 trustees across the nation to ask them what they considered the leading antecedents to expulsion. (Idaho trustees contributed to 2% of Nylander's data.) He tabulated school violence and drug and alcohol abuse as the leading antecedents to expulsion. This matched this author's findings. I found a surprising contentment in 70% of the surveyed school board trustees when they responded that their decisions positively affected their schools. Delgardelle (2007) reported that 96% of the trustees were sure their decisions would improve their schools' test scores in the next five to ten years (p. 32). They did not say what made them made them so sure.

To sum up, many education decision makers and researchers who track them allege a variety of decision-making styles, but many of them may not be entirely aware that human beings, whatever their background or social class, base their decisions on factors that are not always rational. People often find themselves the unconscious victims

of the cascading effect. On the other hand, Surowiecki (2004), the financial editor of *The New Yorker*, writes in *The Wisdom of Crowds* that there are certain areas of life where the cascading effect can lead to some prudent, even profitable choices. He cites the stock market. Buy shares in Google, for example, and so do many others. The result: the value of your shares keep rising, as more investors keep buying Google.

Exclusion Policies

A number of exclusion policies are exercised in our schools. For the last dozen years, zero tolerance has received the most attention. Skiba (2000) suggests that for some, zero tolerance means "one strike [that is, one major infraction] and you are out." Others say, "three strikes and you are out." Many school districts, however, require a mandatory hearing in front of the school board for two major infractions: drug distribution and weapons on campus. In these situations, trustees believe they have no choice: they expel a student because the law requires them to do so (Skiba & Knesting, 2001, p. 40).

Background

Generally, the term zero tolerance means that a harsh predefined mandatory consequence is applied to a violation of school rules without regard to the seriousness of the behavior, mitigating circumstances, or the situational context (American Psychological Association, 2008). Zero tolerance is incompatible with the principle that the punishment must fit the crime, and that the severity of the crime and the context in which it occurred should be considered in determining the punishment. Skiba and Knesting (2001) suggest that zero tolerance policies grew out of the illicit drug interdiction programs of the federal and state governments in the late 1970s and 1980s

where vehicles, vessels, and airplanes were confiscated when even small amounts of illicit drugs were found.

Zero tolerance rhetoric became widespread in the U.S. in the 1990s, as school officials and community leaders were outraged by gang shootings in their own areas, and by media reports about school shootings elsewhere. The automatic weapons fire at Columbine High School in 1999 (thirteen students, one teacher, and two teenage shooters dead, and 27 wounded) drew an enormous amount of publicity.

But school shootings have a long history. The following incidents were recorded in a report from the US Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (2010) about the implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act. In 1940, two young men in Dallas, Texas, who had become enraged when they were suspended from school for using inappropriate language with a teacher, shot and killed 38 students and wounded three teachers. On August 1, 1966, a student at the University of Texas named Charles Whitman climbed to the top of an observation tower at the university in Austin and sprayed the compound below with rifle fire, leaving sixteen dead, and 31 wounded. On December 30, 1974, Anthony Barbaro shot and killed three adults and wounded eleven others on the campus of his high school in Olean, New York. In Stockton, California, on June 17, 1989, five were killed and 29 wounded by a single gunman firing more than a hundred rounds from his AK-47 into a schoolyard. According to the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, during a four-year period, from September 1986 to September 1990, handguns were the weapon of choice in the murder of 65 students and six school employees. The U.S. Department of Education reported that in the 1998-1999 school year, 3,523 students were expelled from school for bringing firearms to school; the

expulsions were prescribed under the U.S. Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA). Subsequent changes in many state laws and local school district regulations broadened the GFSA focus on firearms to apply to many other kinds of weapons. The same act allowed the chief administration officer of a school district to modify the one-year expulsion requirement for students on a case-by-case basis (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, 2010).

In the district I researched, one student who was expelled, parked his pickup in the high school parking lot after an early morning deer hunt. The rifles were exposed through the back window on a gun rack. High visibility of these weapons caught the attention of the resource officer who was making parking lot rounds. Trustees at the expulsion hearing did not believe the student was a danger to other students, rather careless and thoughtless in his desire to get to school on time. The sentence was a modified trimester of expulsion, rather than the full year required by GFSA inspired state laws.

Zero tolerance policies have generally involved harsh disciplinary consequences such as long-term suspension or expulsion for violations involving drugs, alcohol, aggression, such as fighting, and having weapons. Some school officials have applied this policy to minor or non-violent violations of rules such as tardiness and disorderly conduct (Skiba, 2000). These seemingly minor offenses have caused some media and Internet commentators to focus on policies that are perceived to be unfair (Skiba, 2000; Stone-Palmquist, 2005). No one actually makes a case for black-and-white thinking. But, in practice, some school boards have exercised it—possibly because of public perceptions.

The AP-Stanford University Education Poll found that more than 80 percent of

Americans supported zero tolerance policies (Advancement Project, 2010).

In reaction to such a strong public opinion, perhaps the American Bar Association

has adopted statements opposing the use of zero tolerance policies in schools that

constrain administrators from considering the circumstances or nature of the offense or

the student's history. The American Psychological Association (2008) reported:

> Although the research in this area is insufficiently rigorous or wide ranging to
> justify strong statements, concern has been raised in the literature that zero
> tolerance policies may create, enhance, or accelerate negative mental health
> outcomes for youth by creating increases in student alienation, anxiety, rejection,
> and the breaking of healthy adult bonds. Similarly little research has been
> conducted to document the effects of zero tolerance on the families or the
> community. (p. 856)

Martin (2001) reported that the American Bar Association (ABA) voted to oppose

school zero tolerance disciplinary policies that fail to take into account the circumstances

or nature of an offense or an accused student's history (p. 10). "Lowering the boom on

youth that are victims of circumstances through suspension and expulsion is a

questionable practice despite their poor behavioral choices" (Martin, 2001, p. 5).

Zero tolerance policies are under more recent scrutiny and appear ripe for

systemic adjustment. Gibbs (2011) questioned the fairness of zero tolerance in discipline

policies. One of her student examples was Brigham Young University's (BYU) star

basketball player's admission that he did not "live a chaste and virtuous life" (p. 63).

Although this is a college student example, parallels may be drawn to high school

athletes. By suspending this player without investigation, and not considering a whole

team's hard work, BYU lost all hopes of a championship, Gibbs continues saying:

> When authorities confuse intent and accident, when rules are seen as more sacred
> than sense, when a contrite first-time offender is treated no differently from a

serial classroom menace, we teach children that authority is deaf and dumb, that there is no judgment in justice. It undermines respect for discipline at a stage when we want kids to internalize it. (2011, p. 63)

A national reform movement in 2011 is fueled by reports that suspension and expulsion policies are disproportionately targeting minorities, and doing more harm than good by killing kids' attachment to school and putting many on a fast track to failure (Gibbs, 2011; Ferriss, 2011).

Ferriss (2011) summarizes the Center for Public Integrity's analysis of Kern County, CA, public schools. This district has 3% of California's public school pupils (174,000 students), but 14 percent of the state's total of 18,648 expulsions, according to data reported to California Department of Education. Although the district superintendent defends the zero tolerance policies, the Center for Public Integrity shows that few of the 2,578 expelled students were accused of serious violations, such as brandishing a knife or gun, that actually require expulsion. Instead, most expulsions encompassed a range of lesser allegations, such as drug offenses or defiance of authority. Authorities in the Kern High School District say their community supports tough discipline. Their board chairman says, "No one is running for the board on a platform of keeping obscenity-spewing or drug-selling kids in (regular) school" (Ferriss, 2011, p. 6).

Recently, school policy centers are conducting studies on disciplinary policies and procedures. The nonpartisan, Lexington, KY based Council of State Governors released a study in July 2011 tracking all Texas seventh-graders through their senior year. "About 60 percent had been suspended or expelled at least once, but on average eight times" (Branham, 2011, p. 2). The analysis also found that 97 percent of disciplinary actions in Texas were at the discretion of local school directors, not based on laws requiring

expulsion. Sen. John Whitmire, chair of the Texas Criminal Justice Committee, said the state should revisit its zero tolerance policies and ensure teachers have the proper training to address these disciplinary issues (Branham, 2011, p. 6). Another study from the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado collected 2010 data from North Carolina showing racial disparity in expulsion contrasting less than 15% for whites and 32% for blacks (Losen, 2011, p. 3).

Ferriss (2011) reports that the Obama Administration has also joined the debate. In July 2011, the administration's Office of Public Affairs announced the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, which is supposed to develop guidelines to help schools change disciplinary and behavior-management methods, and more judiciously apply suspensions and expulsions (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges took official note, and the administration awarded the Council for State Governments $400,000 to oversee a two-year "consensus-building" project to secure the collaboration of local and state educators in reforming disciplinary procedures. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention are lead agencies in this initiative, which also aims to improve data collection from schools to measure discipline and student profiles. "Ensuring that our educational system is a doorway to opportunity—and not a point of entry to our criminal justice system—is a critical, and achievable, goal" (Holder, 2011).

The administration has more aggressive approaches as well. The Department of Education will not discuss details, but Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan and other education officials confirmed in October 2010 that the department was reviewing

possible disproportionate discipline in districts in Wilmington, DE, Salamanca, NY,

Winston-Salem, NC, San Juan, UT, and Rochester, MI (Ferriss, 2011, p. 20).

Statements about zero tolerance policies allow administrators to say they are

tough on students who violate school policies, and still act otherwise when they see

reasons to make exceptions in certain cases. This is only good jurisprudence, and it is a

reason why we have judges to apply the laws. Thomas Aquinas (as cited by O'Brien

[Ed.], 2006), the medieval philosopher/theologian writes in his Summa Theologiae:

> …it is not possible to lay down rules of law that would apply to every single case.
> Legislators in framing laws attend to what commonly happens: although if the <u>law</u>
> be applied to certain cases it will frustrate the equality of <u>justice</u> and be injurious
> to the common <u>good</u>, which the <u>law</u> has in view. Thus the <u>law</u> requires deposits to
> be restored, because in the majority of cases this is just. Yet it happens sometimes
> to be injurious—for instance, if a madman were to put his sword in deposit, and
> demand its delivery while in a state of <u>madness</u>. In this case, it is bad to follow the
> <u>law</u>, and it is <u>good</u> to set aside the letter of the <u>law</u> and to follow the dictates of
> <u>justice</u> and the common <u>good</u>. This is the object of "epikeia" which we call equity.
> Therefore it is evident that "epikeia" is a <u>virtue</u>. (*Summa Theologica*, 2006, 2a2ae,
> question 120)

Application of zero tolerance policies in situations that appear unrelated to the

purpose of reducing school violence, such as taking a Midol for menstrual cramps or a

kindergartener bringing a butter knife to school, generate the public perception that

administrators are making inappropriate decisions that are not in the interests of students

(Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1999). Multiple suspensions, long-term suspension, or

expulsion may have other deleterious effects on community crime and violence;

removing a student from school also removes him from a place where he can be given

treatment and counseling (Peterson & Schoonover, 2008, p. 2).

Contrary to public perception, school violence is actually declining and the risk of

school shootings is low. According to the National School Safety Center, zero tolerance

for weapons on school grounds has worked. During the 1992-93 school year, there were 56 violent deaths in U.S. schools. By 2001-2002, that number had dropped to five. The *National Center for Education Statistics* reported in 2006 that numbers of expulsions for weapons had dropped since 1999, a finding that indicated the rules are having a deterrent effect. Strategies other than zero-tolerance are likely to be more effective in maintaining and enhancing school safety (Cornell, 2006).

Safer Schools

Over time zero tolerance has come to refer to school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments, such as expulsion, for a wide degree of rule violations. McCullum (2004) reports that, in an effort to protect students' safety and maintain a good learning environment, school officials have most frequently addressed violations of rules restricting the use of drugs, bringing weapons to school, fighting, smoking, and other actions that disrupt the peace of the school with zero-tolerance policies. Some teachers and administrators favor zero tolerance policies because they remove difficult students from school; administrators believe that zero-tolerance policies allows them to take quick actions that send a clear, consistent message: the school will not accept certain behavior. No matter what type of student—honor student or slacker—breaks a zero tolerance rule, the punishment is clear and severe: no excuses.

More Harm than Good

Critics of zero tolerance policies, woodenly applied, cite research that suggests that zero tolerance policies, as often implemented, are ineffective in the long run and are

related to a number of negative consequences, including increased school dropout rates and discriminatory application of school discipline practices. Skiba's (2000) research concluded there is no credible evidence that zero tolerance reduces violence or drug abuse by students. He says, "countless students are suspended, expelled, and many arrested for incidents that were considered horseplay or innocent childhood pranks a generation ago, in effect criminalizing childhood misbehavior" (Skiba, 2000, p. 12). Furthermore, school expulsion results in a number of negative outcomes for both schools and students (Skiba 2000). The American Psychological Association (APA) says that the policies create a number of unintended negative consequences, even claiming these policies make schools "less safe." The APA recommends that officials employ other proven alternatives to strict zero tolerance policies—like official warnings, the use of metal detectors, and stricter monitoring by school police officers and teachers. This, the APA says, will give all students access to an appropriate education in a safe environment.

Peterson and Schoonover (2008) suggested that using zero tolerance creates an impression that those with decision-making responsibilities are taking an inflexible position without regard for the facts and circumstances in a particular case. Others continue to question the effectiveness of zero-tolerance. McCullum (2004) quotes Howard Hastings, a father whose son was expelled for a zero tolerance violation and is a spokesman for the organization End Zero Tolerance: "Schools are not checking to find out whether these policies are actually working. As yet, no school can show that implementation of zero tolerance has actually made the school environment safer " (p. 32).

Skiba, Peterson and Williams (1999) says that when a principal says "'one strike and you're out,' he is posturing for the benefit of the superintendent's office, teacher, and parents, but he isn't helping the kids whom society has marginalized as losers"(Skiba et al., 1999, p. 43). To Skiba, school safety is vital, but zero tolerance is not delivering on its promise and it is ruining the educational hopes of a growing number of students in the U.S.

Alternative Options for Students in Danger of Being Expelled

By law, students are guaranteed due process before and during expulsion (Idaho Code 33-512). Due process entails giving the accused official notice, a fair statement of the alleged crime, a timely hearing, and the presence of counsel. If the accused is found guilty, then district officials have a wide variety of options at their disposal that can affect students' decision to resume or not resume their schooling.

Provisions in the Idaho Constitution create certain rights that belong to every citizen: No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Meade (2006) summarizes these rights for student expellees (pp. 2-4). Article IX, Section 1 of the Idaho Constitution states that it "should be the duty of the legislature of Idaho to establish and maintain a general, uniform, and thorough system of public free common schools" (Meade, 2006, p. 3). In Article IX, Section 9, "the legislature may require by law that every child shall attend public schools of the State throughout the period between the ages of six and eighteen years" (*Idaho Code § 33-201)*. Finally, Article I, Section 13 states, "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." "Due process" is not a fixed concept, but a flexible doctrine that varies with the particular circumstances (*Zinermon v. Burch,* 494 U.S. 113, 1990).

Due process requires notice and some sort of hearing, depending on the severity of the deprivation. For example, in the landmark case of *Goss v. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students have both a property and liberty interest in attending public schools. To deprive a student of those rights, due process must be afforded to the student. The level of due process, however, depends on the level of deprivation. Appendix J shows the standard Idaho protocol for a fair hearing; it must ensure that a student's rights have not been violated (Appendix F-*Behavior and Discipline: Disciplinary Violation*).

The use of policy to control behavior in schools is not new. The need for rules is obvious. When thirty or more students are confined in an area, someone must lay down some rules, and the students ought to follow them. Although public education means equal access and opportunity for all, it is often practical and convenient (and, if due process is used, legal) to remove certain students from school. "These students are commonly considered dropouts, but critics suggest that many of them are pushouts— victims of administrative structures and school policies that enable the circumvention of the intent of universal education" (Epp & Epp, 2001, p. 235). Education Secretary Arne Duncan referred to the United States as the *Dropout Nation* (Thornburgh, 2006, p. 32). Authorities use on-time graduation rates to gauge high school success. But on time graduation is difficult when a student is expelled for a year. Even a stay of sentence, if certain criteria are met, for an earlier return to school can prevent an on-time graduation, especially when the student's hometown and school district cannot or will not offer an alternative setting.

Possibility to Resume Education

What is best often does not match what a local district can or will provide. In some areas, schools work with community agencies like drug prevention coalitions, rehabilitation counselors, public health departments, and juvenile justice departments that can provide assistance to expelled students. Often, parents of the expelled student might not be able or willing to follow a reentry plan. For example, if authorities send an expelled student to a continuation school that is miles away, with no way of getting there, reentry becomes difficult. Every student arrives at an expulsion hearing with a unique set of issues; those making a judgment need to tailor that judgment to a student's circumstances. Alternative schools and special classrooms are serving students who did not succeed in a traditional educational setting.

The National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) offers research, best practices, and professional development to help provide quality alternative education. (2009, p. 4). The organization focuses on promoting high-quality educational services for identified populations of disenfranchised students as well as promoting viable new alternative education programs built on exemplary practices in the field This is a fast-growing field and an evolving discipline. In another document, *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education* (2010)*,* the NAEA made several suggestions for school boards facing difficult expulsion decisions. First, school boards should encourage educators to start talking to the student's family, and to the student's church (if s/he has one) to see what they can do, together, to make life more livable for the student in trouble. Second, school leaders should enlist law enforcement people, the juvenile justice system, and juvenile treatment centers as partners in the rehabilitation of the troubled student. They

could also involve one or more social service organizations in the project: mental health,

juvenile justice, public health, advocacy agencies, child welfare, family support,

judicial/legal, youth service agencies, drug and alcohol programs, and research/evaluation

institutions. Third, the NAEA recommended individualized student learner plans (ISLP),

emphasizing approaches to "the whole child." These plans would engage and challenge

expelled students while also addressing their academic, behavioral, life skill, service

coordination, graduation track, or transitional and vocational needs.

Town and Rural Districts

Rural districts and towns not close to urban centers do not have the services of

large urban centers. For example, Clark County School District (CCSD) serves nearly

300,000 students (Clark County School District, 2011). Collectively their Education

Services Division provides instruction and related services to nearly 50,000 at-risk

students annually. The unique needs of these students require a proactive, progressive

approach in the development of instructional programs in alternative settings. The CCSD

provides programs for dropouts such as tutors for homebound students, several

independent and concurrent enrollment schools, credit by exams, structured settings,

schools within schools, GED opportunity, online offerings, junior and senior high

alternative and continuation schools, as well as traditional comprehensive schools. It

provides institutional programs for adjudicated and incarcerated youth.

The trustee in a rural or town districts might find this array of offerings almost

incomprehensible for lack of social services in areas distant from urban settings where

more services are usually available. But there is no reason why such a trustee cannot

study model programs, elicit community help, and stop making excuses for not providing

some sort of help. The whole community has a stake in such a project. Students who leave school early are already on a fast track to failure: they are less likely to get jobs, more likely to land on welfare, and/or fall into a life of crime (Burt, Resnick, & Novick, 1998; Stone-Palmquist, 2005). Revising hard and fast expulsion policies could help change a little, but important, piece of the world. An intelligent, compassionate expulsion hearing need not be a tool of punishment and exclusion; it could be a launch pad of support and encouragement (Gagne, 1996). Losen (2011) highlights the Baltimore public school system as an example of the type of success that districts can have when they find alternatives. Officials in Baltimore have decreased the number of expulsion by limiting the number of offenses that require sending students home, and the district's graduation rate increased by 20% during that same period. Those results, Losen says, come by way of simple and cheap alternatives. Schools could institute a peer judicial system and additional classroom and behavioral management training for teachers. "The objective should be to keep students in school where they could receive help" (Losen, 2011, p. 1). Along the same lines, the Texas Zero Tolerance Association makes suggestions such as factoring "intent" into discipline decisions, capping suspensions, and providing guidance to districts with disproportionate disciplinary referrals (Evans, 2009, p. 9).

General Education Diploma

Many boards and administrators recommend the General Education Diploma (GED) as an alternative for students who do not "fit in." Boesel (1998) suggests the GED, granted after a student passes a series of tests in five academic areas, is not a productive alternative. He reported that, on average, high school graduates accumulate some 861 more hours (2.1 years) of core curriculum classes than holders of GED diplomas. The 30

hours that GED examinees typically spend preparing for their tests do little to offset this difference (Boesel, 1998). The GED exam does not measure knowledge recall. GED certification provides an opportunity for education (or training), but it is not a substitute for it. Employers, college counselors, and military recruiters regard the credential as a starting point, not as an end in itself (Boesel, 1998; Cameron & Heckman, 2003). On the other hand, the American Council on Education (ACE) President David Ward says:

> Passing the GED Tests provides adults who may not had the opportunity to earn a high school diploma with a credential that earns them the prospect of pursuing a college education, attaining better employment, and ultimately making meaningful contributions to the knowledge economy. (Sanders, 2008, p. 21)

An answer to why employers and colleges recognize a GED but are more favorable to earners of traditional high school diplomas may lie not in the inferiority of the GED certification, but rather in the commonalities among the recipients. GED recipients in general were not successful students who were likely to achieve a traditional high school diploma. These troubles can include expulsion, poor performance in school, lack of discipline or effort, undiagnosed learning disabilities, boredom with traditional learning models, teen pregnancy, lack of parental support, or drug and alcohol addictions (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

I know a young genius in Ohio who was so bored with high school that he dropped out and went to work as a precocious real estate salesman. Then, although he was making more than a good living in real estate and doing the books at his father's dental practice besides, he decided he wanted a college degree in business. So he went through the motions of acquiring a GED. With this piece of paper, he gained admission to a community college and, in a year, made another decision, that he wanted a graduate degree in business. Aware that a dozen good universities were now launching online

graduate programs, he proceeded to analyze their offerings. He chose Penn State. Out of 1500 applicants in the spring of 2011, he was one of ten non-resident online students admitted to Penn State's School of Business (S. Johnson, personal communication, November 24, 2011).

As Hamlet said (in *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 5), "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (Shakespeare, 2010, p. 166). My translation: "Education is where you find it."

Making Amends

> I've had an epiphany, a metamorphosis. I used to be one of these black-and-white, law-and-order guys. Kids had to be held accountable, and the only way to do that was to kick them out of school to show the other kids that you're the boss. That doesn't work. I didn't solve problems. I just postponed them. Restorative practices work. We now fix and solve problems. (Principal Ed Baumgartner Palisades High School, Kintnerville, PA) (Skager, n.d.)

Educators have long recognized the challenge associated with educating students who consider themselves disenfranchised. When educators talk about "the disenfranchised," they are often referring to students who have dropped out, been suspended or expelled. The three have one thing in common. The young people in all three categories are being deprived of something, and that something is knowledge. The nation is coming to the growing realization that traditional schooling alone (a one size fits all solution) does not meet the needs of the country's diverse peoples.

Bridgeland, DiJulio, and Morrison (2006) charged that our current education system is failing a large and ever-growing number of students. Shortly after publication of their report, *The Silent Epidemic*, *Time* magazine followed up with a cover story, *A Dropout Nation* (Thornburgh, 2006) that once again brought attention to the dropout "pandemic" and offered alternative education as a viable option. Experts agree that

alternative education is a positive solution to the challenges associated with these hardest to reach students (Thornburgh, 2006, p. 17).

Trustees are deeply involved with all three issues—dropouts, suspensions, and expulsions. By reason of their elected powers, they are the ultimate decision makers in the expulsion process. Their power to expel is given to them by federal laws, state statutes, and local policies, but it is also attenuated by personal, district, and community values. A reflective trustee does not wish to deprive students of an education. Alternative ways to help these students succeed should be part of the decision. Realistically, however, small districts do not have many services they can provide expelled students. A 21st century education can be the key to economic independence. Students should not be allowed to wander into the world before they have been educated and/or given the training for a trade. "Young people who live in environments or engage in behaviors that put them at risk, either for violence, substance abuse, expulsion, or school dropout, often suffer from lack of adequate supports" (Burt et al., 1998, p. v).

To solve the dropout problem in districts, an increasing number of administrators are turning to a strategy they call "restorative justice." Restorative justice is a method that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. According to the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation (2011), three principles form the foundation for restorative justice:

> (1) Justice requires that work to restore those who have been injured.

> (2) Those most directly involved and affected by crime should have the opportunity to participate fully in the response.

(3) Government's role is to preserve a just public order, and the community's is to

build and maintain a just peace.

In practice, the restorative justice method works like this: An administrator might

employ a face-to-face discussion with all the players (teachers, students, parents,

counselors, others) and come to an agreed resolution that addresses everyone's concerns.

This could be a bright light in a dark process and might discourage the use of expulsions,

which so often are negative, legalistic, adversarial, expensive, and time-consuming

(Chmelynski, 2005, p. 1). Cavanaugh (2008) authored a restorative justice case study. A

15 year old boy was paintballing with friends and fired into a group of girls, shot one of

them in the face, resulting in permanent blindness in one eye. Through restorative justice

procedures, including group conferences lead by a trained facilitator, empathy developed

between the two families. The boy even offered to donate part of his eye if it would

bring back the victim's sight. He wrote an article in the local paper describing the

dangers of paintball guns in general and the specifics of the incident resulting in the

injury. He expressed to the community how sorry he was for hurting the victim and how

such a result should have crossed his mind before he shot the paintball gun. The

probation and jail time was suspended as the victim's family was opposed to any jail

time. Cavanaugh (2008) says this sort of process is "second nature to most people,

whereas the court process is an artificial, ritualized procedure that obscures people's real

feelings and desire for reconciliation" (p. 9).

Student Perception

Few qualitative studies have interviewed students who have been expelled,

especially in the general student population. Several studies do report findings of

perceptions and experiences of emotionally disturbed students (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Skiba, 2000; O'Neill, 2007). Students who are identified as having an emotional disturbance (ED) are more frequently expelled than their general education counterpoints (*Number of students suspended and expelled from public elementary and secondary schools, by sex, percentage of enrollment, and state*, 2005). Piechura (1993) used a naturalistic research design to analyze case studies and gain insight into the student view of their expulsion experience. She interviewed and observed four students with emotional handicaps who ranged from 14 to 17 years of age. The students' perceptions included not being confident academically, being targeted by the school administrator, and having a negative reputation (Piechura, 1993).

Moses (2001) interviewed students who had been expelled. The students in his study primarily felt that their experience of being expelled was unjust; they felt wronged, angry, frustrated, and silenced (Moses, 2001). Being expelled, according to the students in his study, carried a stigma of being a bad person and made them further targets for administrators (Moses, 2001). All the students interviewed by Moses stated that upon returning to their regular campus they received no counseling or assistance in reintegrating into the general population of public school life.

Windfield (2008) used student perceptions in coding 142 parent and 42 student blogs from a website (znightmares.com). Although the website no longer exists, she quotes from the home page that "the website was created by four parents whose children were expelled by zero tolerance policies and wanted to publicize their story" (Windfield, 2008, p. 30). Although not interviewed or surveyed, the anonymous students freely expressed their perceptions. The website was public, but students and parents could

remain anonymous, which may have allowed the comfort of sharing information that they otherwise would not.

Stone-Palmquist (2005) conducted in-depth interviews with 12 expelled students from southeast Michigan. She stated that "while parents took extensive measures to secure an education for their children, the expelled students faced a lonely existence, often cut off from their friends and the structure many needed and craved" (p. 17). The sample of students were from The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, which is an independent organization that provides non-legal advocacy to students and families within both general and special public education programs (Stone-Palmquist, 2005, p. i). Idaho does not have a similar organization for expelled students to get such help or support.

Costenbader and Markson (1998) surveyed 600 middle and high school students about their perceptions of both in-school suspension and out-of-school expulsion. Finding black males students overrepresented, they questioned the efficacy of school suspension practices. Regardless of gender, setting, or suspension status, the feelings most frequently reported by students who were suspended or expelled, were "angry [anger] at the person who sent me to suspension" or "happy to get out of the situation" (Costenbader & Markson, 1998, p. 72). The authors also suggest that if aggression and anger are the most salient experiences for many expelled or suspended students, it is likely that suspension serves only to perpetuate a cycle of violence.

Although student perception input in school expulsion literature is limited, the practice of gathering student perspectives is quite common in many areas of education research. For example, Boise State University gathers data from students at the

conclusion of every course as an evaluation tool in order to understand how students perceive their courses and the way their professors teach them. A Google search revealed 132,000,000 studies with the simple tag "studies using student perception."

Within the field of social sciences, especially law and medicine, client perspective has been used to inform practice. Many doctors argue that understanding patients' concerns, expectations, and requests is essential for health care practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (Kravitz, 2001). Barr and Vergun (2000) report that an increasing number of doctors elicit patients' perspectives both while care is being given and subsequent delivery. As early as the mid-1970s, some legal theorists began promoting a "client-centered legal approach, suggesting that heavy client involvement and control leads not only to higher client satisfaction, but can also, especially for disadvantaged clients, act as a mechanism of empowerment" (Buss, 1999; Cook-Sather 2002).

Education researchers, particularly critical theorists, have used student perspectives to make their case for school reform (Kozol, 1991; Kotlowitz, 1991; Cook-Sather, 2002; Giroux, 1992; Freire, 1998, Windfield, 2008; McLaren, 2003). Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991) embodies this approach in an attempt to raise public awareness of race and class inequities that permeate schools. He strove "to let [student] voices and their judgments and their longings find a place" in his books in the hopes that those voices would also find a place "within the nation's dialogue about their destinies" (p. 5). Kotlowitz (1991) in *There Are No Children Here* closely attended in a similar way to the experiences of children who struggle in underfunded schools located in marginalized neighborhoods. Cook-Sather (2002) argues for attending to the voices of

students who claim they are least often consulted and that most research has been based on adults' ideas about education (p. 1). Authorizing student points of view introduces the missing perspectives of those who experience daily the effects of existing educational policies. Because students "have been silenced all their lives" (Giroux, 1992, p. 158), they have singular and invaluable views on education from which both adults and students themselves can benefit. Freire (1998), too, has a unique authority on this issue. He asserts:

> Coherently democratic authority carries the conviction that true discipline does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced but in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hopes of those who have been awakened. (p. 86)
> Students, teachers, trustees, administrators, policy makers, and researchers could

all participate in this kind of democratic authority if all truly learned to listen and learn from one another. We would be equally responsible for the actions that make education what it is.

Summary

This chapter provided a literature review of the variables associated with the governing authority of school boards, decision-making, zero tolerance influences, options for students to continue their schooling, and student perspective. This work has guided and informed the design of this study, which will address the two research questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Using a mixed-methods approach, I studied eighteen (18) expelled students from a public school district in the Northwest to answer the research questions posed in this inquiry. After piloting a survey and interview questions, I asked students what they thought (and felt) about getting expelled and about their return to school. To drill down into the student expulsion culture, I interviewed a smaller population of four (4) students who agreed to be interviewed in greater depth, using semi-structured interview questions. Sections of this chapter will include: (1) setting and positionality, (2) participants, selection, and demographics, (3) research design and procedures, and (4) believability and limitations.

Methodology

<u>Setting and Positionality</u>

 <u>Setting</u>

  I conducted the research in a unified public school district in the Northwest with an enrollment of 3,400 students from pre-kindergarten to the 12th grade. The district has four elementary schools (pre-kindergarten to grade 5 with 300 to 400 students in each school), one middle school (grades 6-8 with 650 students), one comprehensive high school (grades 9-12 with 775 students), one alternative school (grades 9-12 with 30 students), and one unified school (pre-kindergarten to the 12th grade with 250 students).

The community also has two independent private schools, approximately 20 private preschools and daycare facilities; and three churches were holding classes for elementary students.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), using concepts from the Census Bureau, categorizes schools according to their urbanicity and/or proximity to a metro area. This district locale code is 33, which is a "remote town" meaning a territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area (*Identification of Rural Locales*, 2010). The district encompassed five communities with a total population of 22,000: 78% were Caucasian, 20% Latino/Hispanic, and 2% other. School demographics differed somewhat (63% Caucasian, 35% Latino/ Hispanic, and 2% other). Students were bussed over an area of 2,000 square miles with approximately 8 persons per square mile. The 2010 census reported median household income for this community was approximately $62,000, with home ownership at 68%; 8% lived below the poverty level; 14% were foreign born. Of the population over 25 years of age, 41% had bachelor's degrees or higher (Idaho Counties, 2010). The students in the study were then attending school or had attended school in this district. School years run from late August to late May and data was collected at the beginning of the 2nd trimester, December 2010.

Positionality

Rosen (1998) claims, "A person's knowledge can only exist by virtue of the vast range of past experiences which have been lived through, often with the most intense feelings" (p. 30). Robertson (2002) suggests positionality is only useful if one's position is reflected upon and articulated. Pinar (2004) proposed a "curerre" framework

suggesting educators reflect upon their life experiences in order to take insights from past, present, and future to create transformed educational environments. I was chairwoman of a school board that conducted student expulsion hearings within the district. I also began pursuing my doctoral degree while in this position. These practicalities, while themselves not intrinsically a part of the research process, nevertheless had an influence on it. Recognition of my theoretical positionality can be found in my choice of research literature, which includes school board history, exclusion and expulsion policies, ways to resume or continue education, decision making, and student perspective. I worried that during the interview process my being a decision-maker at their expulsion hearings would make the students nervous and, perhaps, tailor their responses to please me. Being a veteran teacher, a woman, and a mother could affect aspects of the study, such as types of information collected, or the way in which it was interpreted.

Participants, Selection, and Demographics

An example of positionality influence can be seen in my initial selection of participants. I eliminated from the sample a few of those expelled—those, specifically, who did not get processed in the usual manner (i.e., in a confidential hearing before the elected, five-member district board). This was so that all in the survey would have had relatively the same experience. The school board chairman presided over the hearing, like a judge, and the other members of the board acted like a jury, listening to testimony, assessing evidence, and deliberating over a proper action; the superintendent, principal, or a designee acted like a prosecuting attorney presenting the administrative reasons for the recommended expulsion. The boardroom became a quasi-courtroom, with one

exception: the student was presumed guilty as demonstrated by the contents of a pre-expulsion packet that was delivered to the trustees prior to the hearing. The packet included the student's demographic, academic and attendance record, and cumulative discipline records along with transcripts from informal pre-expulsion hearings (if any), and copies of the rules that had been allegedly violated. The student and the parents or guardians had been given proper notice along with a clear explanation of his or her rights to a hearing including the right to be represented by legal counsel. The district supplied translators when necessary. The student was allowed to give his or her side of the story, and bring in corroborating testimony from parents or other family members or friends who could give reasons for the board to come to a verdict short of expulsion. In this manner, the board heard both the administrative and student sides of the case. The school board chairman was to make it clear: they were holding the formal expulsion hearing to make sure they heard the complete story.

Under ideal circumstances, a researcher trying to pinpoint the unique consequences of an expulsion would draw a sample from students randomly expelled or draw a random sample from all expelled students in a region. I found neither course very practical. Because the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) keeps no comprehensive list of expelled students, I would have to rely on busy and often-reluctant school districts to respond to Freedom of Information requests for written minutes documenting any action taken after an expulsion hearing. Even if a full list could be culled from released minutes, contact information would be difficult because student names remain confidential. Thus, again, my knowledge of expulsion procedures, my positionality, influenced my selection.

Selection Procedures

      I purposely drew a sample from 68 expelled students in the district described in the setting section. The local newspaper publishes expulsion decisions rendered by the school board, but it gives no names. An exception occurred in February 2008 when protesters gathered in the early morning hours at the district office to object to a particular student's expulsion and to the district policies that led to this expulsion, thereby breaching the usual anonymity—something that would not have happened without the presence of the picketers.

      Of 68 potential subjects, I chose to include only students from the 6th to 12th grades because this is the time-frame when most expulsions occur. One other limiting parameter was to focus on expulsion decisions made in a seven-year span, between the school years 2003-4 and 2009-10 (Figure 3.1), the years that I participated in expulsion hearings as a trustee. During those years, this district reported no expulsions in the pre-kindergarten-5th grades.
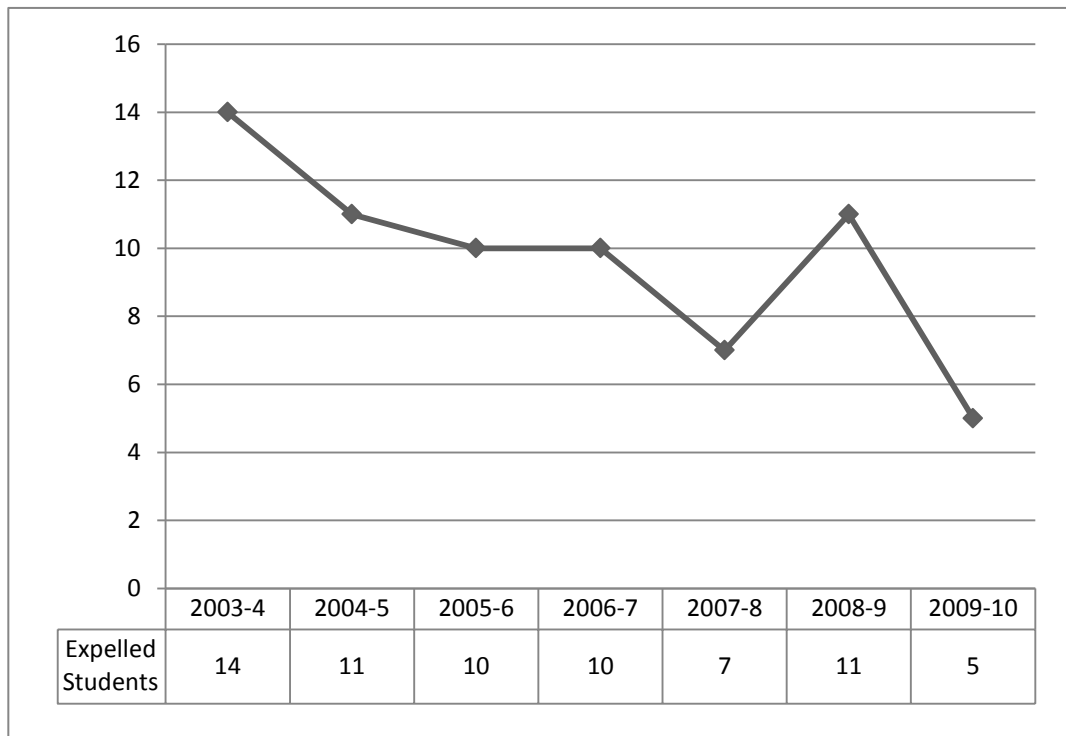
Figure 3.1 Students Expelled (Sept. 2003 – May 2010)

Further deconstruction of the sample of 68 subjects showed two had died, three were incarcerated, two were overseas, and seventeen could not be traced; they had withdrawn from school voluntarily and left no forwarding address. Efforts to find them through inquiries at the U.S. Post Office, telephone directories, or Facebook searches were unsuccessful.

Of these final 44 students invited to participate in the survey (Table 3.1), eighteen returned the survey and four agreed to a follow-up interview. Four parents sent address information, one parent with a son who had reached the age of 18 tried to block the survey by retaining an attorney, and one mailing was returned with a notation: "Addressee Unknown." Based on 44 subjects, the return rate was 41%. Noting a declining response rates to surveys in general, Dillman (2007) offered a range of

strategies to encourage a return of the completed questionnaires, some of which were used in this study—including the offering of a $5 token of appreciation for their cooperation. Using Bennekom's (2005) formula for determining statistical accuracy of a survey, the 41% return rate yielded a 95% certainty, with a plus or minus ten percent margin of error.

<u>Subject Demographics</u>

Of the 18 final respondents, 28% were female and 72% were male, 6% were under 18 and 94% were between 18 and 24 years of age; 78% were Caucasian, 17% Hispanic/Latino, and one participant was an Asian/Pacific Islander (Table 3.1). Ethnicities appear consistent with overall student population ratios.

Table 3.1. Expellee Demographics (District and Survey)

Demographic Information	68 Expellees	18 Surveys
Gender		
Male	55 (81%)	13 (72%)
Female	13 (19%)	5 (28%)
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	43 (63%)	14 (78%)
Latino/Hispanic	23 (34%)	3 (17%)
Asian/Pac Islander	2 (03%)	1 (06%)
Age		
middle school ≤ 15	24 (35%)	0
high school > 15	44 (65%)	1 (06%)
adult ≥ 18		17 (94%)

Three participants volunteered for more in-depth interviews—one Caucasian male, one Asian male, and one Caucasian female. For the purpose of the study, I counted the one Caucasian male as two separate subjects because he had been expelled on two occasions in consecutive years and was interviewed twice.

<u>Research Design and Procedures</u>

<u>Pilot Study</u>

In fall 2010, I conducted a pilot study with one 17-year-old white male student in an eastern state. I was granted permission and consent from the family to send him a survey and conduct a Skype™ interview with him. Both the student and his mother were asked for their feedback on the clarity of the introductory letter, assent and consent forms, appropriateness of the questions on the survey, and on the content of the student interview questions. The responses from the student and his mother did not significantly change any questions. The mother indicated the introductory letter was rather formal and a bit intimidating. Did it have to be? Yes. The IRB strongly suggested the wording. Skyping also created an artificial dynamic, not nearly as effective as interviewing a subject face-to-face. Skype™ is an Internet-based video service that started in 2003; it is a contraction for "sky peer-to-peer" technology (Winzenburg, 2011, p. 3). This Skype™ interview was interrupted more than once by a barking dog, cell phone text and ring tones, and banging doors. After that experience, I chose to conduct only face-to-face interviews.

Mixed Methods

What do expelled students think and feel about getting expelled and what do they think and feel about getting back to their educational pursuits? To answer my research question, I used a mixed-methods approach. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) define mixed-methods research as a type that "combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding" (p. 123). Bryman's (2001) approach to mixed-methods research suggested that for practical reasons one type of technique will usually be primary, but that all research is enriched by the addition of other very different techniques. His view: those using quantitative analysis need to know and respond to what is happening in the qualitative social research tradition. Since I conducted my survey from an insider's, emic, perspective, I felt no special need to balance my findings with a great deal more quantitative analysis than I set out to do in the survey part of my study. To understand my expellees, I used both a survey approach and interviews. Following Taylor and Bogdan's, (1984) phenomenological paradigm, I believe that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of a situation. In my study, concerned as I was in the task of understanding how students thought (and felt) about their experience, I could not define the expulsion process except in terms of the expellees' perspectives (Taylor & Bogden, 1984; Goodenough, 1971). Still, as Powdermaker (1966) suggests, to avoid a subjective bias, I did take measure: there are social facts, and we can know them by assigning them numbers.

Figure 3.2 represents the conceptual design using mixed methods.

Likert-scale **survey** w/open ended questions, demographic info collection

Semi-structured interviews

Data Sources
Initial Analysis

Quantitative
(Analysis of survey data using descriptive statistics)

Qualitative
(coding and content analysis of interview transcriptions)

Data Analysis
Results
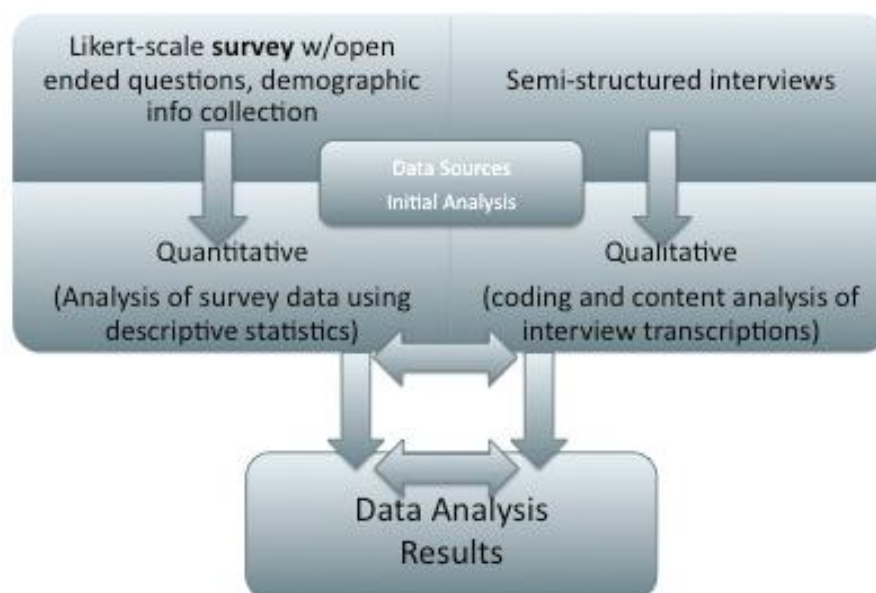
Figure 3.2. Conceptual Mixed-Methods Design

Other areas of concern related to the research questions were: (1) extrapolating components that were critical to the resumption of education after expulsion, (2) finding emergent patterns from students reporting their expulsion processes, and (3) making a deductive judgment: how can a district ensure a quality education for all of its students unless it takes some steps, even at times very drastic punitive steps, to establish peace and justice on campus?

Procedures

I sought and received approval from the superintendent and endorsement from the school board to do the research within the district and kept the superintendent apprised of the fieldwork as it proceeded. Upon approval by the superintendent, I submitted a proposal to the Boise State University Office of Research Compliance, along with other

forms requested by the university. After receiving Internal Review Board (IRB) approval

(#101-SB10-078), I sent an invitation letter to potential participants that briefly outlined

the survey, the purpose of the study, and information on how to contact the investigator

(Appendix A.1). The letter also requested that each sample participant fill out, sign, and

return a consent form that assured confidentiality (Appendix A.2), along with assurances

that participation was voluntary, and that the participant could terminate the process at

any time. If a potential participant had not reached the age of majority (18), a letter was

sent to parents asking permission for their son or daughter to participate (Appendix B.1).

Included in the letter was a parent consent form (Appendix B.2) and the teen assent form

to be signed and returned (Appendix B.3), along with an assurance of confidentiality

(Appendix B.4). All written correspondence, surveys, and assent forms were translated

into Spanish (Appendices C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4).

Survey

After potential participants accepted these terms, I mailed a paper-and-pencil

questionnaire during the 2010 Christmas season accompanied by a five-dollar bill to each

of the final 18 subjects. The initial survey instrument, a questionnaire (Appendix D)

solicited optional demographic information and answers for specifics dates, reasons for

expulsion, and current educational placement. It also used a 5-point Likert scale (from

strongly agree to strongly disagree) about motives for returning to school, fairness of

discipline policies, and zero-tolerance and drug and alcohol policies. Open-ended

questions were designed to solicit the main reasons for returning to school and the

perception of whether or not the expulsion was fair. Eighteen (41%) of 44 surveys were

returned. Returned questionnaires were tallied and analyzed by entering response data in

a spreadsheet and into the Qualtrics survey program. Results will be detailed in Chapter Four. Identifiers were not used unless the subjects indicated they wanted to be interviewed. The survey responses were analyzed for descriptive statistics and cross tabulations performed to better understand how different categorical survey items related to one another. For example, I had to ask, "Did my young women participants differ from the young men in their judgments about the fairness of the expulsion process?"

Interviews

In January and February 2011, I conducted follow-up interviews for each expellee who agreed to be interviewed in an environment that was chosen by the individual. Locations for three students (one expelled twice) included a community center, a participant's home, and a coffee shop. The follow-up interview questions were divided into three areas: 1) graduating/current placement, 2) experience prior to expulsion, and 3) post-expulsion experience. Appendix E details the script of interview questions.

1. What grade are you in or did you graduate?

2. From what school did you graduate?

3. Did you graduate with your class?

4. What was your school experience like before this expulsion?

5. Tell me about the specific events that led up to the expellable incident?

6. Did you receive a pre-expulsion hearing? If so who attended?

6a. Why didn't that help you avoid getting expelled?

7. What was the reason you were expelled?

8. Did you have any knowledge of the expulsion process before this expulsion?

9. Did you feel the decision was fair?

10. Were educational placement options discussed with you after you were expelled and if so what were the options?

11. Since this expulsion has anything changed for you?

12. What was it like getting back to school?

13. What helped you most in getting back in school? (For example was it a parent, peer, program, personal decision, etc.)

14. What would you like to see the district do in helping you succeed in school?

Since qualitative interviewing is undertaken with the assumption that what people believe is important and relevant, it was significant to try to unlock and reveal those thoughts. Patton (1990) says that we interview people to "find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe" (p. 278). Things that cannot be observed include feelings, thoughts, and intentions as well as incidents that have occurred at an earlier time or are subject to multiple interpretations.

I used semi-structured interview techniques. This type of interview consisted of a set of questions I deemed important to explore with each of the subjects. The structured questions were followed by a series of follow-up, open-ended questions, which were designed to allow the subjects to expand on their experiences and to allow more complete, richer data. Patton (1990) suggests that asking the same open-ended questions of each subject decreases the probability that bias will enter into the study.

Bias becomes more probable when a researcher asks different questions of different people. Patton (1990) also advised: "By controlling and standardizing the open-ended interview, the evaluator obtains data that are systematic and thorough for each respondent" (p. 281).

Marshall and Rossman (1995) have a reason for leaving the interview somewhat semi-structured or open-ended. Doing so allows the participant's perspective on the subject matter to unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it—something of great value according to Taylor and Bogdon (1984) because it allows the researcher to learn what is important in the minds of their informants. Open-ended questions help a researcher "…obtain firsthand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions and rating scales" (Taylor & Bogden 1984, p. 7). Accordingly, Marshall and Rossman (1995) agreed and reiterated that one of the most important aspects of this type of research approach was to "convey an attitude of acceptance that the participant's information is valuable and useful" (p. 80).

My impressions after each interview were written in field notes immediately after the interviews were complete; a technique suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and Miles and Huberman (1994). I then transcribed and coded the responses for emergent themes relating to the research question.

I heeded the suggestion by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that the unit of analysis could be knowledge-sharing among professionals. Content analysis is a generic name for a variety of textual analyses that typically involve comparing, contrasting and categorizing a set of data (Schwandt, 1997). Krippendoff (1980) suggests an important element in making a cogent content analysis: identify an appropriate unit of analysis. I used Budd, Thorp, and Donohue's (1967) definition of a "thematic unit" (TU), which is "a single thought unit or idea unit that conveys a single item of information extracted from a segment of content" (p. 34). Table 3.2 displays these thematic units.

Table 3.2. Thematic Units (TUs)

Code	Definition	Example
CP	Child Psychology-Defense of one's own character	I am a good student
CA	Child Affective-Feelings and emotions during and since expulsion, such as confusion and fear	I was terrified
CPS	Child Psychological Situational—Injustice, disillusionment, discontent with system	I think a suspension would have been better.
OUT	Outcomes-describes some aspect of the student's life that was altered during or since expulsion.	Manual labor at a sugar beet factory
OT	Other-refers all other information in narrative that does not fall elsewhere in the above categories.	I did [online] school for awhile. It was just impossible for me
G	Graduated high school	yes or no
SAS	Student assessment of situation before expulsion	I wasn't there a lot
DLE	Description of event leading up to expulsion	It was in my gym class
PEH	Pre-expulsion hearing	yes or no
F	Student perception of fairness of expulsion	No, it got escalated
PO	Placement options	Yes or no. Nobody spoke to me
M	Main mentor to resuming education	Mom
ADV	Advice for improving post-expulsion system	A program across the street

Believability and Limitations

Knowledge obtained from the study must be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Thomas, 2006). These are the qualitative equivalents of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity seen in quantitative research.

Credibility

Credibility in research is established when the subjects agree the reality described by the findings resonates as accurate. Credibility is the strength of qualitative work (Cesswell, 2003). Miles and Huberman (1994) even suggest credibility is qualitative research.

Many strategies help provide the credibility demanded of qualitative research (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). "It is incumbent on a qualitative researcher to demonstrate through the use of multiple strategies that their research is credible" (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). The ones incorporated in this study are peer debriefing, member checks, and context-rich description.

1. Peer debriefing is the practice of discussing the researcher's finding with a disinterested peer who will probe and question the researcher for clarity in the research (Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003). I held debriefing sessions with a graduate of Boise State University's Doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction, now a school administrator.

2. Member-checking, also called informant feedback, is a criterion in establishing credibility ((Mertens, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman,

1994). I did this by going back to interview subjects with a summary of the

interview and asking them if the summary accurately reflected their position.

3. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a credibility technique is spending

    sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the phenomenon of interest.

    This includes speaking with a range of people and developing relationships

    and rapport. The time investment facilitates understanding and construction

    of meaning. My eight years of participating on expulsion panels, talking to

    administrators, teachers, parents, board members, and conducting an in-depth

    survey to board members about their perception are examples of sufficient

    time in the field. Using these techniques produced a study less affected by my

    own bias and, thus, helped make the study more believable.

Dependability

Dependability is akin to reliability in quantitative research. Because qualitative

studies make no claim to be replicable, the standard shifts to one of disclosure (Ewing,

2011, p. 61). Miles and Huberman (1994) have defined dependability as "whether the

process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and

methods" (p. 278). I transcribed the recorded interviews as soon as possible following

each of the meetings. I enlisted a second coder, a recent doctoral graduate, to help

establish coding reliability, and made sure she was familiar with the coding process.

When we noted a discrepancy in our coding, we discussed the thematic units and related

them back to the categories. Then, we agreed on certain criteria that helped us choose

one category over another. I wrote my field notes immediately after a coding session;

they helped me include any meaningful attitudes or gestures that were not recorded on the

audio tape.   Lastly, I added my own reflective commentaries after I did my follow-up

calls, when I thanked participants for their time and contribution to the research. That

gave the subjects one more opportunity to expand on any responses that might have come

across as vague or ambiguous.

Transferability

Transferability implies that others can adapt what they have learned in this study

to their own contexts and their own needs. Producing a context-rich description that is

sensible, convincing, and plausible (Cresswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994) is a way

of achieving a type of external validity. By describing the expulsion phenomenon

perceived by some students in sufficient detail, one can begin to evaluate the extent to

which conclusions drawn are transferrable to other times, settings, situations, and

students. Thomas (2006) has argued that only "the reader determines the transferability

of a case study" (p. 414). According to Mertens (2005), the only way to establish

transferability is to create that thick description of the "time, place, context, and culture"

(p. 256). Lincoln and Guba (1985) give the rationale for such a strategy: "So that

someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity" (p. 126). This study,

I submit, contains the "thick description" necessary for the reader to assess

transferability.

Confirmability

Confirmability means that someone other than the researcher can confirm the data

(Thomas 2006).   Mertens (2005) puts it this way: "Data and their interpretation ought not

be figments of the researcher's imagination" (p. 257). Miles and Huberman (1994) have

described confirmability as, "relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases—at the minimum, explicitness about the inevitable biases that exist" (p. 278).

To establish confirmability, it is important to establish an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). An audit trail is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of the project to the development and reporting of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 310-319). The audit trail for this study includes:

(1) Raw data and interview notes;

(2) Data reduction and products of the analysis, including condensed notes, quantitative summaries, and theoretical notes;

(3) Data reconstruction including structure of categories for themes and definitions, findings, and conclusions;

(4) Process notes on methodology, procedures, designs;

(5) Materials relating to intentions including inquiry proposal, reflexive notes, and predictions;

(6) Instrument development information including pilot forms, schedules, observation formats.

Limitations

The study's primary limitations are typical of qualitative research. Because the scope of the study is limited, other school districts may not be able to generalize from the results. The results may only apply to one public school district. Additional limitations of scope include the contextual elements of time and location. The study was conducted over several months and limited to one public school district in the Pacific Northwest of

3,400 students. A smaller district may have provided entirely different data, as would a suburban or urban district, or a district in another state.

The researcher as an individual becomes a vital element of the study. I brought with me a distinctive set of principles, experiences, and predispositions, which could not help but influence the direction of the study (Marshal & Rossman, 1995). Experiences as a professional educator and trustee have informed worldviews inseparable from the focus of the research. It was therefore incumbent on me to use methods of trustworthiness described above to minimize the impact of these biases.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Overview

In Chapter Four, findings of the study will provide an understanding of the scope and impact of student expulsion. The research questions will be analyzed in the context of the reasons for expulsion and the participants' understanding of the expulsion process. Five summations of themes relating to the questions will be discussed: (1) expelled students felt their expulsions were unfair, but they did express general support of zero tolerance policies for those bringing weapons to school and for violating school rules on drug use, possession, and trafficking; (2) expelled students expressed feelings of isolation after the expulsion sentence; (3) the majority (75%) of expelled students resumed their educational pursuits; (4) parents, especially mothers, had the most influence in students' decision to resume their education; and, (5) expelled students expressed a need for their district to help them, not exclude them.

Research Questions

This study sought to address two questions:

1. What are the perceptions of expelled students about their expulsion process?

2. What do expelled students think and feel about resuming their educational pursuits?

Context

I analyzed the incidents that precipitated expulsion of sixty-eight (68) students expelled from 2003-10, eighteen (18) surveys, and four (4) interview transcripts. Additionally, participants were asked if they understood their expulsion processes. Answers to these two questions set a frame of reference for determining patterns and themes.

Reasons for Expulsion

Table 4.1 lists an array of offenses. Although the public school district in this study does not have a written "zero tolerance" policy, some past offenses have resulted in automatic expulsion. The three main elements in the unexpressed-but-real zero tolerance policy are: (1) guns and weapons on campus, which are prohibited by the federal GFSA, the Gun-Free Schools Act (Pub. L. 103-382, Title 1, δ 101. October 20, 1994, 198 Stat. 3907); (2) distribution of illegal substances; and (3) Level II drug offenses, with which students are charged when they get caught twice for being in an altered state or for possessing any illegal substances including, but not limited to, drugs, inhalants, alcohol, and tobacco. Policies and Procedures for the district that is the context for this study are in Appendixes F—Behavior and Discipline Violation Policy and Appendix G—Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Prohibited Substance Behavior and Discipline Procedures.

Table 4.1. Reasons for Expulsion

Reason	Survey	%	Interview	%	All Students	%
fighting/assault & battery	1	6%	0		2	3%
*Drugs/alcohol/illegal substances (Level II Offense)	7	39%	1	25%	33	49%
truancy/attendance	1	6%	0		1	1%
terrorism/bomb or killing threats	2	11%	1	25%	2	3%
*violation of behavior contract	2	11%	0		10	15%
computer hacking/falsifying record	1	6%	0		1	1%
*weapons on campus	1	6%	0		6	9%
gang activity	0		0		4	6%
*distribution of illegal substance(s)	0		1	25%	3	4%
threats and intimidation	3	17%	1	25%	4	6%
vandalism/burglary/theft	0				2	3%
Expelled students totals	N = 18			N=4		N=68

*Zero Tolerance Tradition

Level II drug offenses were the main reason for expulsion for all subjects—49%

of the overall population, 39% of the survey respondents, and 25% of the interviewees.

Violation of behavior contract was the second most expellable behavior with 15% of the

total population and 11% of those surveyed reporting. No interviewed subject was

expelled for that offense.   School administrators, however, may have placed students on

a contract as a warning to help improve their behavior—with the understanding that non-

compliance would automatically send a student to the school board for an expulsion

hearing.

The school board expects complete compliance with the contract, thus, after this

second chance, the board creates an unexpressed, but real, zero tolerance situation. See

Appendix H for an example of a typical behavior contract in the district.

A third category of offense is terrorism and threats/intimidation. Those categories in the overall population (i.e., contract violation and threats/intimidation) made up about 10% of all offenses and somewhat higher among survey respondents at 28%.

Lesser percentages were fighting/assault and battery (which accounted for 3% of total student population and 6% of the surveyed population). The survey revealed one case of truancy—(6% of the total). One student hacked into a school computer and falsified records. While four students (6% of the total student population) were expelled for weapons possession on campus; only one of those students responded to the survey. Gang activity and vandalism, burglary, and theft were not represented by those surveyed or interviewed; those offenses, however, represented 9% of the total population's offenses. Drug distribution, a zero tolerance offense, comprised 4% of the total district offenses, 25% of interviewees, and 0% in the students who were surveyed. Because the offenses were self-reported in the survey, the category "distribution of drugs" was not specified. Students reported distribution within the Level II category.

<u>Understanding of the Expulsion Process</u>

The three-part understanding of the expulsion process included the student's knowledge of the nature of the infraction, formal hearing procedures, and the outcome after the school board trustees render a decision. Analysis of the survey revealed that students did not understand the whole process, only the length of expulsion; whereas, interviewed participants revealed deeper answers about the expulsion process. Of those surveyed, five (5) were year-long terms and seven (7) had stays and criteria to fulfill that helped them return to school before the passage of a full calendar year. See Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Survey Responses to Expulsion Length

Year-long expulsion	Year expulsion with criteria to return to school earlier	No response	
5 surveys	7 surveys	6	N-18
3 interviews	1 interview	0	N-4

In the interviews, emerging themes came from students reporting the process of their expulsion. All but one of the interviewees understood the process. Only one had an informal hearing. An "Informal Expulsion Hearing" takes place in the district office with the student, the parents, and the superintendent, or other board designee, such as the assistant superintendent, who discuss the disciplinary infraction—usually considered the last step before a formal expulsion hearing takes place. Before this step, the student and parents have had an informal "conference" with the principal to discuss the disciplinary situation and possible terms of suspension. Students and their parents or guardians sign a behavioral contract that outlines what the student must do in order to stay in school. One contract infraction can lead to an expulsion hearing. A typical contract contains some general stipulations such as a good faith effort to do well in classes, no harassment or intimidation, no tardiness (Appendix H). The contract is often tailored to the offense. For example, a student caught in a drug violation might have to agree to random drug testing. A bullying student would be expected to treat student, staff, and students with respect. Generally, an informal hearing has either of two outcomes: the student is returned to school and given an additional chance or the student is referred to the board for a Formal Expulsion Hearing. District policy on informal hearings is Appendix I.

Table 4.3. Expulsion Process Responses

N-4 (Interviewee)	Yes	No
Understands exp. process	3	1
Had an informal hearing	1	3

Findings/Discussion

The findings will be presented in the following summations:

1. Expelled students felt their expulsions were unfair, but they did express general support of zero tolerance policies for those bringing weapons to school and for violating school rules on drug use, possession, and trafficking.

2. Expelled students expressed feelings of isolation after the expulsion sentence.

3. A majority (75%) of expelled students resumed their educational pursuits.

4. Parents, especially mothers, had the most influence in students' decision to resume their education.

5. Expelled students expressed a need for their district to help them, not exclude them.

6. Other influencing factors.

Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Expelled Students About Their Expulsion Process?

Themes clustered in the first two summations: (1) expelled students felt their expulsions were unfair, but they did express general support of zero tolerance policies for those bringing weapons to school and for violating school rules on drug use, possession,

and trafficking, and (2) expelled students expressed deep feelings of isolation after the expulsion sentence.

Summation 1

Summation 1 was: Expelled students felt their expulsions were unfair, but they did express general support of zero tolerance policies for those bringing weapons to school and for violating school rules on drug use, possession, and trafficking

Whether or not students received an informal hearing prior to being expelled, all surveyed and interviewed students provided answers to their perception of fairness.

Perception of Fairness: Sixty-five percent (65%) of those surveyed said their expulsion was not fair; 35% thought their expulsions were fair decisions. Of the three students interviewed, 75% thought their expulsions unfair and 25% (one of them) thought it was fair. In a gender cross tab analysis, females sided with fairness more often (75%), as was the case with the one young woman who was interviewed, referred to from now on as "Marie—her name changed, of course, to insure anonymity. "Alex" and "John" became pseudonyms for the young men who were interviewed.

Table 4.4 represents the descriptive analysis in numbers and percentages.

Table 4.4. Expulsion Decision Fairness

	Fair decision	Unfair decision
Survey (N-17)	6 (35%)	11 (65%)
Female (N-4)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
Male (N-15)	3 (20%)	12 (80%)

Interviewees (N-4)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
Female (N-1)	1 (25%)	0
Male (N-3)	0	3 (75%)

Marie, who was expelled for a Level II drug offense, simply admitted, "Yes! I was expelled for a year. I did a lot of drugs and got caught many times. I had been suspended, suspended, suspended. They gave me every chance before they expelled me." The survey question that addressed fairness was open ended, and yielded answers such as: "I agree that there were no other disciplinary actions that could be taken," or "I deserve it because there's [sic] consequences to everything and I honestly was not being good."

Since a majority responded "unfair," I made an effort to see if any patterns emerged. I found two: 1) not taking full responsibility by blaming others, and 2) minimizing the severity of the incident.

John was expelled at 16 for terrorism and the following year for distributing marijuana. His testimony spread the blame to others:

> I don't feel that I should have been the only one in trouble for that at all 'cuz, like, there were a bunch of seniors there like talking to me and egging me on and saying stuff to me. And like, I was only a freshman. Wow.

The other young man I interviewed, 20 year-old Alex, had been expelled for intimidation. He said:

> I think I could have been punished for it, but not to the point of expulsion. I didn't do some of the stuff that I have heard of or that other kids done. And they got maybe like two weeks suspension and they came back to school. I wasn't that out of line as other kids.

Survey respondents also blamed others.

- "I was blamed for something I did not do. When I logged on to the computer a message came up—'2:10 Bomb.'"

- "I felt that the school vice-principal unfairly flung me out of school."

- "The principal didn't like me and tried to make my attendance at the school bad."

- "Everybody else does it, too. I just told the truth and I got in trouble for it."

- "I was in a tight-knit Mormon community to where if you don't practice you were shunned and bullied. I fought back. The kid that bullied me was the principal's son. I fought back and was expelled."

Often respondents minimized the incident. John had this to say about terrorism:

> I didn't know that I could get expelled for that because people say stuff like that everyday, to like one another, and like I honestly had no idea that I would ever like ever get in trouble for that. No, I was not aware. It got escalated.

He did not believe that anyone would take his threat seriously, because he did not mean "kill" in the literal sense of the word. The young woman he threatened, however, did take it seriously. She went immediately to the authorities and said she feared John would kill her. (John tried to explain. "There were eight seniors egging me on. I didn't even know the girl.") He did not feel his second expulsion for drug distribution deserved expulsion.

> Not fair. The thing was that I didn't even have that much weed. I had like a baggie that had weed in at one time. And you could tell that there was weed in it. And they still expelled me for it.

Alex, whose infraction (intimidation) occurred at another campus, said:

> I tried to go to the office and they declined my request. So, automatically, I got angry and you know I said some stuff and that got me in trouble with the high school when I came back to school.

Shorter responses from survey respondents indicated they, too, underrated the seriousness of the offense.

- "No, because I accidentally had the knife in my backpack. I didn't bring the knife to school to hurt anyone."

- "I was not in possession of anything. I was under the influence."

- "A good portion of kids in my school are smoking weed anyway."

- "That little incident that happened at the middle school."

Survey participants revealed perceptions of fairness when ranking fairness of overall district policies. The district did not have a written zero tolerance policy, but students still understood that certain offenses would not be tolerated. In a survey question using a 5-point Likert Scale of 1--strongly agree to 5--strongly disagree with a 3 being neutral, students were asked to rank the fairness of discipline policies in three areas: the district's discipline policies, zero tolerance for guns and weapons on campus, and zero tolerance for distributing illegal substances. The answers are displayed in Table 4.5, with 93% of the respondents either being neutral or feeling the policies were not fair. However, zero tolerance for guns and weapons on campus and drug and distribution were in the majority of agreement areas.

Table 4.5. Fairness of Discipline Policies

N-16	1 SA	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 S DA
Discipline Policies	1 6%	0	5 31%	5 31%	5 31%
ZT Guns Weapons	11 69%	0	0	3 19%	2 12%
ZT Drugs Distribution	7 44%	2 12%	1 6%	2 12%	4 25%

Not all interviewees addressed zero tolerance policies. John said that he "understands exactly where they are coming from with zero tolerance." He expanded on that:

> But, like when you are really trying to help the kid I'm not a fan of zero tolerance because I understand zero tolerance is not the way to go. What they are trying to do like as soon as they see a problem like they get rid of it. But like that's all they are doing is getting rid of the problem. They aren't fixing it.

Student Psychology

The responses indicated that mental and emotional factors exacerbated the situation before, during, and after expulsion. The interview question, "What was school like for you before the expulsion" produced various answers. Marie said,

> I have a problem with authority and people telling me what to do. I didn't really feel like I had to do what other people asked of me. I think that is a huge part that I wasn't willing to do a lot of things that were asked of me.

She also stated, "I wasn't really there a lot. School was good. (But) I had other things I wanted to do." Like Marie, Alex gave a brief assessment about his life at school. "I wouldn't say (I was) a troubled kid. I did get my schooling done." John's statement was more dramatic, "When you're in school you want to be out, I wanna be out, I wanna be out." He also said he was "not thinking" before the drug offense. These responses did not pinpoint any particular problem at school; they did reveal little enthusiasm for high school.

Responses indicated that these students might have benefited from theraputic support, possibly preventing them from being expelled and offering support during the expulsion sentence. Severns (2009) suggests that "the enormity of [student] psychological need leave many administrators discouraged and overwhelmed" (p. 47).

Even if structures are in place for an effective discipline program, there are special problems that are often not addresses, like lack of motivation and its relationship to discipline and students who have trouble paying attention and the classroom problems that result.

Some emotional problems are easily observable, while other are not. If a student has internalized emotional problems, the teacher may not be aware of the students' distress. Gresham, MacMillan, and Bocian (1996) characterize internalized emotional problems as feelings of helplessness, apathy, moodiness; whereas external emotional problems are characterized as a discipline problem. Defiance, aggression, impulsivity, conflicts with other, temper tantrums, bullying behavior, lack of empathy or compassion, and poor academic performance are often associated with externalized emotional problems (Greham, MacMillan, & Bocian, 1996).

Analysis of Summation 1

The total of district expulsions (N=68) for 2003-2010 showed 53% (36 students) were expelled for being under the influence, possessing illegal substances, or distribution. Of the eighteen students who returned surveys, 39% had violated similar policies. Half of the four interviewed students were expelled for drug policy violations. These numbers, presumably, could be much higher because students can be expelled for violating their behavior contracts. Many of these contracts originally were crafted in an Informal Expulsion Hearing for first time drug violations. One of the eleven contract items is "no consumption or possession of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or other illegal substances." The school board inserts its power into the contract by concluding with the statement, "The Board expects 100% compliance with the Behavioral Contract." In other

words, the board has zero tolerance for contract violators. Other offenses like fighting, assault & battery, truancy, terrorism, threats, computer hacking, weapons, gang activity, vandalism, burglary, and theft are not to be minimized as serious violations; however, a majority of the expelled students fell under drug violations. Appendix G is the district's Behavior and Discipline Procedure for Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Prohibited Substances. Level II is the second offense where law enforcement agencies are informed and the student recommended for an expulsion for one full calendar year. Thus contract violations and Level II drug offenses are in the same category as drug distribution and weapons on campus; they are all "zero-tolerance" offenses.

The majority of expelled students said that zero tolerance policies were fair. They also felt their own expulsions were unfair. In effect, they considered their own cases did not quite fit under the general rule.

My findings showed that 65% of the subjects responding to the survey and 75% of the face-to-face interviewees felt they were unfairly expelled. Marie, a young woman, spoke for the minority opinion. "Yes," she said, "they gave me every chance before they expelled me." Those who considered their expulsions unfair fell into two categories: 1) they were not taking full responsibility by blaming others, or 2) they were minimizing the severity of the accident.

Psychologists explain the pattern by putting a label on it, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). They use the term to describe children and adolescents who refuse to comply with adult requests, refuse to follow rules, blame others for their misbehaviors or mistakes, and frequently have an angry attitude (Lehman, 2012). This is not to imply these young adults have this disorder, rather to stress that this behavior is not really that

unusual in adolescents. The true disorder has an extensive checklist of behaviors; blaming, defiance, and anger are only part of them. No doubt any reader who has been a teacher or administrator has seen these behaviors in their students.

Lehman (2012) claims that it is much more common in males until puberty when the male: female ratio becomes 1:1. Excuses like "I was only a freshman," "I was blamed for something I did not do," "Everybody else does it," "Not fair," predominated in the interviews. Table 4.7 shows how students ranked the fairness of district policies. Two-thirds of the students felt the district's discipline policies were unfair. Another third were neutral and only one student thought the policies were fair. Yet 69% of surveyed students supported zero tolerance resulting in automatic suspension for having a weapon on campus. Fifty-six percent felt that zero tolerance for drug distribution was fair. Without interviewing these students face-to-face, and having to rely on one or two sentence statements, it is difficult to say why they answered the way they did. These are students who grew up with national media accounts of school shooting in Moses Lake Washington (1996), West Paducah, KY (1997), Littleton, CO (1999), Santee, CA (2001), Blacksburg, VA (2007), and, most recently, a shooting incident at Okios University in Oakland, CA on April 2, 2012. Students know that guns and schooling do not mix; they have seen the news accounts about senseless woundings and killing sprees that often end up with the shooters killing themselves. Killingbeck (2001) claims school shootings receive extensive media coverage even if they are infrequent. Fears about school shootings are considered a type of "moral panic" (Killingbeck, 2001, p. 186). Students believe the media attention is a good thing if it leads to making guns on campus a non-negotiable item.

Mass media also reflects society's condemnation of drug dealing. Students read news stories (or watch them on television) about drug dealers facing felony charges, extradition, sting operations, federal prosecution, and mandatory prison sentences. Students in this study have also learned lessons about the dangers of drugs through various school and community programs, such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). Only one of the students I interviewed, and none of those I surveyed, was expelled for distribution. John, the one distributor, minimized the seriousness of distribution and considered it merely sharing a "little bowl with a little weed."

Summation 2

Summation 2 is: Expelled students expressed feeling of isolation after their expulsion sentence.

Varying expulsion and return-to-school experiences coalesced into an isolation theme.

Of the interview subjects, none said they were given options for district schooling off campus. Since 2009, a support program for suspended and expelled students was developed. The "Alternate Settings Center" (ASC) now provides an array of services to students who are unable to attend their regular educational setting due to short- or long-term exclusion from school for disciplinary issues, as well a for homebound instruction due to accident or illness extending over ten days. See Appendix L—Alternative Settings Center. The ASC is an off-campus lab, monitored by a credentialed teacher, where expellees can go to stay current with their course work and communicate with high school counselors and teachers. Expelled students may attend from nine a.m. to noon, if the board allowed it in the hearing decision. Before 2009, the only schooling option

provided by the district was off-campus tutoring, usually in the public library. One

student, John, talked about his tutoring experience.

> As soon as I got expelled, I started getting tutored. I kept up with my classes. I did better when I was expelled, though, Like when I was expelled I literally got all A's. It was so easy. I had like a 2 hour class, like I wouldn't get that much work done. They'd give me like a sheet of homework, which I had all week to do. 'Cuz I didn't have that class until the next time next week.

When John answered the question about what it was like being expelled, his affect

revealed a young man who was stressed by his isolation.

> It's, like, horrible being expelled! Angry. Lonely This is nuts! What have I gotten myself into? This is crazy. Staying home every day is horrible. Being expelled, like, at first, you think it's awesome. At first you're, like, hey, I don't have to go to school anymore. Two weeks goes by and you do everything you possibly can do and then you're just like…When you are out of school for like 3 months, all you want to do is be around people. Have like a conversation with someone. It's like horrible being expelled!

> Everyday got worse and worse. Like, I was literally going crazy and losing my mind. It was the same shit everyday. Like I woke up, did nothing, tutor came for an hour, I did nothing, went to bed and did the same thing over again. And then like a friend came along and sometimes I'd hang out with my friends, but since I wasn't in school I didn't have as many friends, and so I hang out with the same two or three people like every weekend. And I was literally ready to kill someone to go back into school. I was willing to do anything I had to go back to school.

Alex had an entirely different experience. "Nobody spoke to me about anything." His

tone was matter-of-fact:

> I stayed at home for about two weeks and realized I had nothing to do. I had no job, so I moved with a friend in [agricultural town 100 miles from district]. Worked with employment offices. I worked for the sugar company and I did 12-hour days, every day, except for Sundays. I don't want to do manual labor so decided to go back to school somehow. But my expulsion was still on so [I] kept working and trying to find more jobs.

> I would like to join the military, but not with a GED. I was expelled and did not come back for 2 years. Right now I'm 20 and going to be 21 in July. This is kind of my last chance.

Marie's immediate post-expulsion experience was a joint family decision: either to do home schooling or send her away "somewhere." They chose home schooling.

> So it was either my parents made me go somewhere else and go to school for a year or do home school. We decided to research all the home schooling options and the one we chose was really good. They sent all the information and the books and everything to my mom and she was my teacher. I was happy with the interaction. I had tried all my classes before and they were not for me.

Her affect with the home schooling decision suggested a happy girl: however, isolated from peers. In her words:

> [Mom] kind of approached it in a manner where she made it fun and made it something that I wanted to do. I think it was a really positive experience—graduating from [home] school. And we got to spend time together and you know I got through and they had all kinds of options like doing free style ski team was considered PE credit. Stuff like that. It was really fun.

Analysis of Summation 2. The expulsion process results in the student being "kicked out of school." This metaphor is common lingo for expulsion; a Google search taking 21 seconds revealed 56,200,000 results using the term "kicked out of school." That quick snap of reality when students are told they are not to step foot on any campus in the district or attend any school sponsored activity, is a mental and physical jolt to an unknown land. During the post-expulsion days, students had to settle into life outside school, which appears to have resulted in a painful sense of isolation. John said, "All you want to do is be around people. Have like a conversation with someone…I did nothing, went to bed and did the same thing over again." Alex said, "I stayed at home for about two weeks and realized I had nothing to do." This research mirrors a study conducted by Stone-Palmquist (2005) who also found that students became depressed and expressed thoughts of suicide. (In fact, one student in my data set did commit suicide.) In her study about students excluded from school, Winfield (2008) wrote,

"Students expressed confusion and fear on the onset of the expulsion unsure of what to do about the situation. This spiraled into feelings of sadness and depression, which seemed to consume them in their isolation" (p. 66).

Some carried the emotional baggage of exclusion. Others talked about the loss of structure and purpose in their days. John said, "I was bored out of my mind. I was miserable, like, it was hard to deal with not being in school." Alex said that if he had not been "kicked out," he would have graduated with his class two years ago. This failure of students to maintain contact with people in their normal school day, the routines, the everyday communication proved deeply isolating, an aftermath which took several directions. Some students wanted desperately to return to schooling and normalcy. Such isolation galvanized some parents into action. Marie's mother started her daughter on a successful track of homeschooling. Other parents became more involved in their children's lives, perhaps for the first time, by becoming advocates for their expelled children's successful futures.

Research Question 2: What Are the Perceptions of Expelled Students About Resuming Their Educational Pursuits?

Findings for this research question were in responses to questions about resuming schooling after the exclusion period ended and what advice the students would suggest to encourage success. Three themes emerged: (1) The majority of expelled students (75%) resumed educational pursuits, (2) Parents, especially mothers, are the most influential mentors in resumption of education, and (3) Students express a need for their district to help them, not exclude them. While the survey did not solicit data about what life was like for the expelled students during their time away from school or what it was like to

return, it did help me gather information about the schools to which respondents returned and graduated (or not). I also gained information about their significant mentors and wondered whether or not they found any particular programs helpful.

Summation 3

Summation 3 is: Seventy-five percent of expelled students in both the survey and interview group resumed their educational pursuits.

Participant interviews disclosed an array of responses about returning and reasons to return. As reported by Marie, returning to school was a positive experience and qualitatively different than Alex's and John's. They both returned to the traditional high school, John with his class, and Alex two years later to the alternative high school. Upon admission to the alternative school, 20 year-old Alex said:

> It was a little different. I had to get used to new rules and also I felt awkward with younger people around me. Most of the friends I had weren't around anymore. So, I really felt strange, very awkward. And that really didn't help much.

When John returned to school, he had a hard time talking about his exile:

> Some people, like, think I'm, like mad scary and stuff because I've been expelled… everybody, I kid you not, I mean everybody says "Where you been?" "What happened?" "Like what's going on?" "How you been?" You don't want to answer them at all. You don't want to talk to them. You just want to act like nothing ever happened. You want to get back in the swing of things, but everybody says like "I haven't seen you in so long, like where have you been?"

Returning to school was difficult for some. I further investigated the motivation behind returning to school with open-ended responses to Question 14 on the survey. "What was the main reason you returned to school?" Patterns emerged (as presented here in Table 4.6):

Table 4.6. Reasons for Returning to School

Theme/Pattern from Q 14	N=14
Isolation	2 (14%)
Importance of education	7 (50%)
Self efficacy	5 (36%)

Two students showed reasons centering on feelings of isolation.

- "I need social contact."

- "I felt isolated and wanted to get back with my friends."

Another pattern: recognizing the importance of an education.

- "To have the ability to get a degree."

- "You need an education to survive."

- "So I could go to college and have a career. I went to Apollo and became a certified massage therapist."

- "I will graduate from college this spring with a BA degree. I know an education is important; however, what I did is not the usual reason to be expelled."

- "So I could graduate to join the United States Marine Corps."

- "I fulfilled my contract, did public service, and kept up with my classes. I know the importance of graduating."

Five responses indicated self-motivation.

- "I'm going to be someone in life and I will fight regardless of my last breath to make my dreams come true."

- "I thought about returning to the alternative school to graduate but I knew I could get a GED faster. I didn't want to do all that recovery of credits and I couldn't do it to graduate because I failed my senior project. So I got a GED."

- "I learned from my mistakes."

- "I'm doing online classes that the school accepts. I chose not to go back to school. It's been hard on my family, but I will make it."

- "Because a lot of people, including teachers and administrators, thought I'd never graduate. I showed them I could."

Since 94% percent of subjects surveyed and interviewed were 17 and older, I gathered graduation rates and information on the amount of time it took to receive a diploma, whether "on time" or not. The survey addressed that item in two questions: "Did you return to school?" and "Did you graduate with your class?"—that is, with the same students they started with in the 9th grade. A third survey question requested specific graduation dates; it also asked the students what type of schooling they pursued. Categories included traditional high school, alternative school, virtual school, home school, or a GED program. Table 4.7 presents the survey responses received.

Table 4.7. Return to School after Expulsion

Return to school after expulsion?	N - 16
Yes	12 (75%)
No	4 (25%)
Graduate with class?	N-12
Yes	4 (33%)
No	8 (67%)
Ways of graduating on time or earlier	N- 13
Graduated with class	4 (31%)
Graduated early	3 (23%)
Participated in credit recovery	1 (8%)
Still in high school	5 (38%)

Institution of graduation	N - 15
Traditional high school in district	3 (20%)
Traditional high school other dist.	1 (7%)
Alternative high school in district	0
Virtual school (online)	0
Home school	2 (13%)
GED	4 (27%)
Other	5 (33%)

In the interview group, the percentage of those completing high school matched the survey group with 75% graduating on time or early. Alex dropped out one month before he could have graduated from the district's alternative school. Marie graduated one year earlier than her class and John graduated on time with his class in the traditional high school. John also received tutoring after expulsion to keep up with credits and school work. "I was just told that tutor was going—like I was going to meet at the library with a tutor. I kept up with all my classes both times and I was working like everyday."

His tutoring was accompanied by community service. "I did a lot of community service—Habitat for Humanity." He also went to mandatory counseling, "which my mom paid for."

No expelled student in this study attended an on-line school; however, references were made to using on-line classes for recovering credits. Marie attempted on-line classes for a while but stated how difficult it was for her.

> It was just impossible for me because, you know, you have to email your teachers and wait for them to get back to you. It's like you get stuck and they wonder why you're not continuing to go along because you can't go along until you have the right answer.

Alex, too, commented on an online experience:

> I even tried to apply for some high school online. It was supposed to be accredited, but I'm not really quite sure. But I thought about it and, you know [then] I did some research on my careers and other choices.

Efforts were made to contact Alex about clarification of what schools he applied to, but he was unavailable for a member check of the transcript and a chance to clarify.

                    <u>Analysis of Summation 3</u>. Survey responses showed 31% graduating on time, 23% graduating early, and 38% still in high school. Only 20% graduated from the traditional high school in the district from which they were expelled; 7% (1 student) graduated from a high school in another district; 13% graduated from a home school; 20% earned a GED; and the remaining 33% responded "other." Open-ended responses to "other" included attending an out of state school during expulsion sentence and attending an alternative school. While not all of the respondents graduated on time, the important factor is they resumed schooling and graduated. Although a variety of schools were attended, no on-line schools were mentioned.

While not all of the respondents graduated, on time, they resumed schooling and graduated. Although a variety of schools were represented, no on-line schools were mentioned. Several students related attempts to take on-line classes; however, the main reasons for lack of success in on-line attempts included lack of a real teacher to help and insecurity about whether the online credits would be accepted towards graduation. Survey findings revealed half of the student-respondents graduated on time, graduating with their 9th grade cohort. John, the student who was expelled twice, received extensive tutoring that helped him keep up with his class, which contributed to his on-time graduation.

    <u>Summation 4</u>

Summation 4 is: Parents, especially mothers, are the most influential mentors in the resumption of education.

Along with being asked to talk about their return experiences, my interviewees had positive things to say about those who encouraged them to go back to school. I asked the surveyed students to rank specific groups of potential "mentors" on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Categories included parent/guardian, program (i.e., rehabilitation, anger management), peers, teachers, adults other than family, administrators, counselors, probation officers, opportunity to return to an alternative school, district support services, and other. Parents/Guardians were the most influential mentor at 70% of the agree and strongly agree categories. The 18-20 year old age group valued the influence of their peers, but I recorded no similar responses for the older and younger set. As in all survey responses, not all 18 subjects responded; 16 responded to my invitation to rank the influences that brought them back to school. "Other" answers revealed that personal motivation was a significant reason to return to school. Three (3) gave main credit to themselves, one said he had "an epiphany," one said he had his own "parole plan," and another said, "I personally wanted to better my life." Table 4.5 shows responses in percentages for survey question 12, "If you resumed your schooling after expulsion, please rate each statement using the following scale: 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-neutral, 4-disagree, 5-strongly disagree."

Table 4.8. Responses to Survey Question 12 (Mentoring)

Question #7	1 SA	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 SD	Participants
Parent/Guardian	68.75%	25.00%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%	16
Program (i.e. rehab drug/anger	6.25%	0.00%	12.50%	6.25%	75.00%	16
Peer(s)	20.00%	26.67%	13.33%	0.00%	40.00%	15
Teacher(s)	6.25%	6.25%	18.75%	0.00%	68.75%	16
Mentor(s)	6.25%	6.25%	18.75%	0.00%	68.75%	16
Administrator(s)	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%	6.67%	86.67%	15
Counselor (outside school)	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	6.67%	60.00%	15
Probation Officer	14.29%	7.14%	21.43%	0.00%	57.14%	14
Alternative Sch.	0.00%	13.33%	0.00%	13.33%	73.33%	15
District Support Services	6.67%	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%	60.00%	15
Other	75.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50	8

Interviewees' responses gave "Mom" a 100% response for being the main mentor and motivator for returning to school. Marie praised her mother. "My mom, it was her idea. She's awesome. Yes, I love her!" John's simple statement was, "My mom. Definitely she was pushing the school board to get me back in." Alex also credited his mother.

> My mom. She had a push on me. She stressed; she would always go into conversations about: So what are you going to do now? Where are you going to go? How are you going to get a good job? Like, do you want to work like that laborer?

He also voiced appreciation for "all the support from my principal, vice-principals, and even the superintendent to let me back in school."

Analysis of Summation 4: Mentor is both a noun and a verb. The word implies the presence of a caring person who has energy, knowledge, and ideas to help the expelled student return to schooling. In Greek mythology, "Mentor" was a friend of

Odysseus entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son Telemachus (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

The survey requested students to check off the programs and people (possibly mentors) that helped them resume their education. Sixteen respondents ranked categories on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The eleven categories included: parent/guardian, a program (e.g., drug rehab, anger management), peers, teachers, non-family mentors, administrators, counselors (outside school), probation officer, opportunity for an alternative school, district support services, and other. Parents/Guardians ranked highest as the most influential mentor accounting for 70% of the agree and strongly agree categories. A high percentage of respondents ranked special programs such as drug rehabilitation and anger management (81%), opportunity to return to an alternative school (83%), non-district counselors (66%), teachers (69%), administrators (93%) as not influencing their decision to return to school. Not all of the expelled students in my study ended up in the juvenile justice system. However, of the fourteen responses, 21% felt probation officers influenced their decisions to return to school. "Other" answers revealed a category that was omitted in the survey: self-motivation, achieving without pressure or prodding, proved to be a significant factor in a young person's desire to return to school. One said he "had an epiphany." Another said, "I wanted to better my life."

All interviewed students gave their mothers credit for being their main mentors in the journey back to school. The parent/guardian classification in the survey was not defined into sub categories such as mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or guardian. Certainly "Mom" would be in that category. John's words are telling: "My mom…

definitely pushing the school board to get me back in." Marie extolled her mother's

influence. "My mom...she's awesome." Alex discussed his mother's more nagging push,

"[Mom] would always go into conversations…what are you going to do now, where are

you going to go, how are you going to get a good job, do you want to work like that

laborer?" Like Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who called her mother a true

mentor, someone who gave her "a love for higher learning, curiosity about a larger world,

and a will to persevere," these expelled students credit their mothers for getting them

back on the journey towards completion of high school (McFadden, 2011, p. 19).

    70% of all respondents felt their parents were highly influential in their return to

school, particularly their mother's influence. We saw the soft touch of unconditional

love, like Marie's mother, the more aggressive approach of John's mother who "pushed"

the school board, and Alex's mother who constantly reminded him of a future without

schooling.

    <u>Summation 5</u>

    Summation 5 is: Expelled students express a need for their district to help them,

not exclude them.

    I asked the four interviewed participants specific questions eliciting advice for

education leaders about the expulsion process. The survey did not include any questions

on advice.

    Marie had positive things to say about her home school experience, but she

wished that the authorities had given her an opportunity to enroll in an alternative school:

> Maybe help someone find a school that's right for them. I'm really grateful that I
> have, you know, my mom who could afford home school. You know, home

school is really expensive and moving is really not an option for a lot of people. So maybe try to find something that they can do, like go to the alternative [school]…Like if I'd had a choice to go to the alternative school I would have, I think. Um, something along those lines. There is a place for people to go, rather than having to move to a different school. Or something… you know, maybe funding for home school?

John's words echoed that "someplace" with

A program across the street. I don't know what it's called. But it's, like, for kids that aren't the best; they're kind of delinquents. Kids that get in trouble a little bit…it's, like, separated from the main school. And, like, you are never in the actual school and you are off school grounds. They didn't even give me that option. I, like, would have much rather have done that than to be expelled and tutored.

Alex wished there could be other options for expelled students:

I think there should be something that is lighter, not as extreme as expulsion. I say expulsion should be reserved for something really bad, or some kind of different punishment. I feel like you aren't really helping someone by expelling them. What are you telling this person [is]that, oh just, you're done, get out of here! Like, I couldn't go into any school in the district. That's what an expulsion is. I just believe even if there is an expulsion for some kind of action then they should help them find other ways to get their education. You know if this person wanted to be expelled and their actions said, like, at least some guidance into what they should do. You should help them.

All interviewees said they could have used more tutoring during their time away from school. Some said they would have welcomed the opportunity to take some courses on the Internet. Marie, who had an unsatisfactory experience with online classes, said she would have appreciated an off campus site where expelled students could continue their classes. "I think that's cool. You know they are doing online classes, but they still have a teacher to help you."

Analysis of Summation 5. I encouraged my subjects to talk about educational policies and practice (in this case discipline policies and expulsion systems), hoping that student voices might help school policy makers see new, and possibly more effective,

ways of dealing with the entire expulsion process. Cooke-Sather (2002) said that

educational institutions and practices that have prevailed historically reflect a basic lack

of trust in students and "have evolved to keep students under control and in their place as

the largely passive recipients of what others determine in education" (p. 4).

Descriptive data shows that 93% (counting neutral responses) of expelled students

do not perceive their own expulsion as fair. This in itself may serve as is a call for school

leaders to examine their expulsion incidents, offenses, and procedures of expulsion to

determine if they are fair to the individual student and to the whole school population.

Zero tolerance, although not written in policy except for guns and weapons and Level

II/Distribution policies, played a role in expulsion decisions. A majority of responses on

the survey favored expulsion for those offenses. John's interview affirmed understanding

automatic expulsion policy, but added that administrators consider fixing problems rather

than expelling. John said, "What they are trying to do, as soon as they see a problem,

they get rid of it. But that's all they are doing. They aren't fixing it."

All those interviewed applauded their opportunities to enroll in some form of

alternative schooling. John called it a "program across the street." He didn't know what

it was actually called, but his understanding showed that it was for "kind of delinquents"

and "separated from the main school." He stated "they didn't even give me that option. I

would have much rather have done that than to be expelled and tutored." Marie who was

expelled several years before John, said, "Maybe try to find something that they can do,

like [go] to the alternative [school]."

Although interviewees suggested alternative school might be a good means for

continued schooling, surveyed students did not. Eighty-three percent of survey

respondents answered strongly disagree or disagree to "opportunity to enroll in an alternative school"; however, this response rate needs explanation. The "survey" question may have been misleading. At the time of the survey in December 2010, "opportunity" was synonymous with attending an alternative school. At the time these expulsions occurred (pre-2010), the district in this study had a small alternative school of approximately 15 students who were selected at the beginning of the school year for low academics and needs not met at the larger traditional high school. Expelled students had no option to attend this school. At the same time, other than tutoring, it was up to the parents and students to find a means for of recovering their credits. After 2010, school administrators began to give parents lists of online credit recovery possibilities, such as those offered by the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), fee-based on-line high school class offerings from Brigham Young University (BYU), and online offerings by the Richard McKenna Charter High School. Expelled students were also encouraged to contact the superintendent, assistant superintendent, or board clerk for assistance. If recovering credit was part of the contract and the exclusion was less than a year, students were required to prove they had taken (and passed) classes before they could return to school. Prior to 2010, expelled students were banished from every school building in the district.

The school district might have had a policy of benign neglect. John's mother had to "fight" with the school board to get him back in school. Marie's mother took the responsibility for home schooling Marie, which, according to Marie, was "an added financial burden." Alex said, "Even if there is an expulsion for some kind of action then they should help them find other ways to get their education…at least some guidance into

what they should do. You should help them." This study's findings suggest that parental help and personal motivation made up for the minimal assistance afforded by the district.

Summary

In this chapter, I have used descriptive data from the survey and coded transcribed interviews of four expelled students to help me understand what students thought and felt about the expulsion process. I presented my findings within the context of the reasons for the participants' expulsions and their understanding the expulsion process. The five summations of the findings were: (1) expelled students felt their expulsions were unfair, but they did express general support of zero tolerance policies for those bringing weapons to school and for violating school rules on drug use, possession, and trafficking; (2) expelled students expressed feelings of isolation after the expulsion sentence; (3) 75% of expelled students resumed their educational pursuits; (4) parents, especially mothers, had the most influence in students' decision to resume their education; and, (5) expelled students expressed a need for their district to help them, not exclude them. Conclusions regarding these findings and the need for further research will be presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Chapter Five presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations from this study. It also points to limitations and suggests how further research might contribute to a better understanding of the expulsion process.

I set out to examine a group of expelled students from a unified public school district in a Northwestern community of approximately 20,000 residents. My research centered on student expulsions; I asked questions that I hoped would help schools and school districts take a deeper look into the expulsion process, focusing most particularly on how the students themselves perceived their own expulsion and how, what influenced their decisions to resume or not resume their education. If school board trustees could hear the view of students who had been expelled whether the experience hurt them or helped them, I reasoned such students' perspectives could guide future policy decisions. I surveyed eighteen expelled students and followed up on that survey by doing face-to-face interviews with four others who had been expelled. My two research questions were:

1. How did expelled students perceive their expulsion process?

2. How did the students look upon the resumption of their educational pursuits?

In both of these inquiries I looked for patterns, asking students what it was like being expelled and what motivated them to resume a traditional high school education, go into an alternative setting, or simply drop out. Influenced by more than a decade of

research related to zero tolerance policies (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams ,1999; Skiba et al., 2009). I asked expellees to tell me how they perceived the school district's zero tolerance policies, its disciplinary procedures and the fairness of their own expulsion. Students told me how they felt about the whole experience, before and after their expulsions. In taking this approach, I was following the lead of another researcher (Cook-Sather, 2002), who argued that policy makers are not really serving the whole community if they disregard the point of view of an important segment of the population they are committed to serve: that of the students themselves.

I drew three conclusions from this inquiry:

(1) Although 75% of expelled students resumed their education, they did not attribute returning to factors related to the public schooling system.

(2) Twenty-five percent did not resume their education.

(3) Students seemingly have contradictory thinking about their expulsion process.

 No rank order exists in these conclusions and each has a set of implications, which will be detailed in the following sections.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1

Although 75% resumed their education, they did not attribute returning to factors related to the public schooling system. Mentoring, isolation after expulsion, and personal motivation all played a role in a return to school.

Findings showed the importance of mentoring from either school personnel, a trusted adult or peer, or an available program for at-risk populations. The interviews revealed that parents, especially mothers, were the most influential mentors in the

resumption of education. Seventy percent of all respondents felt their parents were highly influential in their return to school, particularly their mothers. We learned of the soft touch of unconditional love, like Marie's mother, the more aggressive approach of John's mother who "pushed" the school board, and Alex's mother who constantly reminded him of a future without schooling. School leaders might consider tapping more into this parent-resource. They spend money on rehabilitation and anger management programs, on staff to administer them, on counselors, and support services, and alternative schools. They might also consider providing parents with available resources and suggest strategies to keep their troubled children occupied in constructive activities while they "serve" their expulsion terms—one more way perhaps of helping their children get back to school. It seems too obvious to say, but we need to say it: we must, value moms (and cheer them on) as they help their children grow, and grow up. When a parent enrolls their child(ren) in a public school the school gains permission to act as a parent in behalf of their child. If there is an incident, school leaders may take action as long as the child is in school grounds. *In loco parentis* is a common law doctrine that has been used to characterize the on-campus relationship between a school and its students (Black, Nolan-Haley & Nolan, 1990). Providing a "mom-like" mentor might be a step toward keeping expellees in school.

Even mothers could not assuage the feeling of isolation after the expulsion sentence. This finding taps into the emotions of the students and those who decide to exclude the student from school. This effect of expulsion is something trustees, who sit in judgment, might not be taking into account in their decision to expel. Once a student is excluded, the responsibility goes to the family and the student to fill that school time,

hopefully in constructive ways. Students talked about being bored, miserable, confused, insecure, sad, and lonely away from their social networks and activities. Without family support, a student without supervision could be even more troubled. Some students wanted to return to schooling and normalcy. In some cases, like Marie's, her parents became an advocate for their child's success. Stone-Palmquist (2005) also concluded that expelled student faced a lonely existence, often cut off from their friends and the structure many needed and craved (p. 17). School leaders might consider what happens when they put students into this kind of isolation. Will it help them become more successful students and more successful human beings? Ironically, this exclusion can motivate students to return to schooling.

Finally, personal strengths and reasons tangentially related to formal schooling often expedited a return to school. Understanding the importance of education and self-efficacy proved strong motivators in the findings. Phrases like "I know the importance of graduating," " I will graduate so I can join the United States Marine Corps," and "so I can go to college and have a career" showed that graduating high school was important to the expellee. Also revealed in responses was self-motivation in learning from mistakes. Participants demonstrated internal drive to return to have a better future or prove to family, teachers, or administrators that they could complete high school in good standing.

<u>Conclusion 2</u>

Twenty-five percent of expelled students did not resume their education. Although three-quarters of the participants did resume some kind of schooling, twenty-five percent did not. A moral obligation of school leaders is to provide education for all. Losing students is not acceptable. Major changes in American society including

economic transformations and the expansion of civil rights, population growth, immigration, poverty, and school violence have affected public education. Mondale and Patton (2001) suggest that over time, the following have all been goals of public education: preparing children for citizenship, cultivating a skilled workforce, teaching cultural literacy, preparing student for college, and helping students become critical thinkers able to compete in a global marketplace.

Ravitch (2010) stated education is "intimately connected to our concepts of citizenship and democracy and to the promise of American life" (p. 14). The historical section of the literature review in Chapter Two addressed reasons federal, state, and local governments provide education from the basics of "reading, writing and 'rithmatic," to socialization, the skills necessary to compete for jobs in a fast-changing global economy, and, as John Dewey suggested, to participate in a democratic society. Students in the study said they knew a high school education was necessary to succeed. On one hand, it is commendable that 75% returned to some sort of schooling whether traditional, alternative, home school, or completing a GED program. On the other hand, 25% did not. Of the 75%, only 20% graduated from the school from which they were expelled.

Many variables contribute to these numbers such as personal motivation and preference or opportunity to continue in another type of schooling. The rest, the 25%, joined the ranks of the high school dropouts, a phenomenon that Bridgeland et al. (2006) called "The Silent Epidemic." Their report presented the disturbing view: on average, dropouts earn $9,200 less per year than high school graduates and are twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty from one year to the next (p. 2).

Any student who does not pursue a high school education merits attention, even alarm, from school board trustees, who are both policymakers and expulsion agents, and from educators, administrators, and families. This effort is try to keep students from embarking on a journey to a dropout wasteland. Expelling students? This is a process that, often enough, puts them halfway there. According to statistics from Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) there is a growing challenge for individuals with only a high school diploma to find stable, well-paying jobs. The costs of dropping out are born not just by individuals, but by the communities in which they live, and the rest of society (*High school dropouts in America* 2010, p. 17). The potential economic benefit of improving students' academic outcomes is a call to the importance of keeping students in school with graduation goals.

Conclusion 3

Students have seemingly contradictory thinking about expulsion. Contradictions surfaced in findings about the students' desires to be helped rather than excluded and their expressions of unfair expulsions coupled with a belief that zero tolerance is acceptable for certain offenses. This conclusion contextualizes a twin challenge: authorizing student perspectives and encouraging a change in mindset of school leaders by giving expelled students a chance to suggest changes that would have helped them rather than exclude them without opportunity. I wanted them to have an authentic voice. When students are taken seriously and attended to as knowledgeable participants in important conversations, they feel empowered and motivated to participate constructively in their education (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001).

By including students in conversations about educational policy and practice, in this case, discipline policies and expulsion systems, I made an attempt to use student voices to help school policy makers start thinking about new, more creative ways of confronting a major problem.

Descriptive data showed that 93% (counting neutral responses) of expelled students do not perceive their own expulsion as fair. That in itself is a call for school leaders to examine the expulsion process to determine if they really are fair to the individual student as well as the whole school population. They might start by helping students understand the efficacy of rules in the first place. John's insight was to "fix" the problem, not get rid of the student. Granted, not all students can be "fixed" by educators and counselors in the public school system. Some students need referrals to outside experts. However, schools and school districts can and do devise alternative strategies—and significant fixes.

Students voiced concerns in other areas. They agreed with zero tolerance proponents that automatic expulsion for guns and weapons on campus and most drug policies are necessary. They deemed opportunities to enroll in an alternative school or a place to go to keep up with their school work as important ways to break the isolation of exclusion and to keep up with their school work. Stories of isolation and lack of socialization tell trustees that this is psychologically difficult for students and makes one wonder if this really is helping them grow to be better citizens. The effects of the expulsion process might compel school leaders to reassess their policies and procedures—in other words, ask themselves what might help John and Marie become more productive citizens.

Students thought zero tolerance rules for the two offenses—guns and weapons on campus and repeated drug violations and distribution—were fair. The data showed that over half of the students expelled from this district broke drug rules. By minimizing the seriousness of the offense or blaming someone else, they did not apply zero tolerance to themselves. This is not to exclude the minority opinion of those students, who took full responsibility for their poor choice of behavior on campus, and fully accepted their expulsion sentence. Perhaps part of growing up is realizing that breaking rules has real-world consequences. I conclude from this contradiction that school leaders are charged to make sure that their procedures are so utterly fair that no one can challenge the outcome.

Recommendations and Implications for District

<u>Recommendations</u>

1. Prevent Expulsions. Implement teacher training in classroom behavior management, individual behavior plans for misbehaving students, conflict-resolution curricula.

2. Narrow the scope. Reserve the calendar year suspension for serious incidents involving firearms and preserve local case-by-case discretion. Recognize that an "equally harsh" approach does not ensure fairness.

3. Encourage alternatives. Add creative alternatives to disciplinary policies such as in-school suspension with instruction and counseling, mediation, community service, anger management classes, counseling, and restorative justice. The word "discipline" comes from the Latin root "to learn." Discipline could provide an opportunity for learning.

4. Ensure education. Many school districts are financially challenged. District leaders have many reasons not to provide alternative programs for troubled students. All the more reason to keep young people, even troubled young people, in school, no matter what policies (like zero-tolerance) might seem to hold sway. Trustees have a duty to ensure an education for all.

5. Recognize the importance of parenting. Give parents, mothers in particular, support by supplying lists of community resources and help with dealing with the isolation their child will be experiencing.

6. Support creative programs, such as having expelled students or formerly expelled students talk to a potential expellee about what it is like to be expelled. Use their perspectives.

7. Set up a good tracking system for all students including those who are expelled.

8. Pay attention to the point of view of troubled students. Listen to student voices. Expulsion is a complex process.

9. Engage in decision-making training, particularly, for trustees who are judge and jury in the final stage of expulsion decisions.

Implications for District

I entered upon this study hoping to give new perspectives to school board members, some of whom are in the unique position of both setting district-wide policies and enforcing them. If a district supports zero tolerance for infractions, as happened in the district under study here, then trustees might not take individual circumstances into consideration when deciding a student's fate. Mitigating circumstances might not mean

anything to the school board and to the district administrators, who do not take individual factors into account when deciding on expulsion.

School boards are increasingly paying more attention to student achievement in large part because of accountability standards in No Child Left Behind legislation (Wirth & Kirst, 2001; Hess, 2010; Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2000; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Delgaradelle, 2008). Where do expulsions fit in when the focus is on raising test scores and funding staff and programs to do just that?

Strict discipline policies may mean there might always be some unwarranted expulsions. In a zero tolerance world, a weapon is a weapon; a butter knife as dangerous as a stiletto; tobacco as addictive as marijuana; a beer equal to crack cocaine. Expulsion has many more negatives than in-school suspensions, and few, if any positives. Three advantages of excluding a troublesome students from school are saving the district money, removing to improve the safety of the student body, and keeping the peace of the learning environment.

Expulsion for the dangerous student is necessary; but for those with complex circumstances, in-school suspension or funded off-campus alternative settings may be a better option. Expelled students in the study sent that message. The isolation and uprooting from routine was overpowering. It did not "fix" them. The burden to fix them was dropped entirely on the family; shared responsibility between the district, student, and family might have been a more appropriate solution.

Expelled students interviewed for this study were left with no guidance, no activity, little or no education. The 75% who completed their education did so for a variety of reasons. Help from the school was not one of them.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

<u>Impactful Limitations</u>

The conclusions of this study pertain to the population described. Because the sample size was relatively small (N=68), whittled down to 44 subjects to contact, survey, and interview, the results might not generalize to a larger population of the same size without similar demographics (Glesne, 1999). Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000), therefore, the study's findings may not generalize to larger populations of expelled secondary students or expellees who do not share similar demographic characteristics. Disciplinary and expulsion issues may, and do, differ in urban, suburban, and rural areas as well as in different geographical areas with different demographics. Replications with similar surveys and interviews with other populations would help strengthen the findings. Replications in urban or rural districts would produce comparative data that would support or negate the findings.

A triangulated case study would enhance the data, but rules about keeping student records confidential make it difficult, if not impossible, to capture that data.

Correspondingly, a significant amount of time had passed since some expulsions had taken place. The memories of those who did agree to the survey might well have been sharper and more detailed if they had taken place earlier. Another time frame for the actual study, instead of the Christmas holidays, might have produced a different set of answers. I made that choice because I hoped I could reach more adult age expellees who might be home visiting friends and family during the holiday season. But doing the survey during the holidays had a down side. In the hustle and the bustle of Christmas time, some possible subjects might have disregarded the survey. I did not do a follow up

reminder, as suggested by Dillman (2007). The 44% return rate was, thus, based on one primary mailing. I did not give my potential subjects an electronic option; a decision I made based on a former survey I conducted that had a much larger return rate from mailings. This age group might have responded more robustly if it had been designed with SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, or another electronic questionnaire programs in developmental stages at the time.

Triangulation of data sources would have enhanced the study. I was hampered because records for expelled students were sealed. Rules mandating confidentiality barred me from compiling a more extensive biography and story for each student, particularly the interviewed ones. Important artifacts such as discipline records, grade reports, even elementary school records would allow for a more detailed student profile, thus allowing deeper understanding of the student and his/her perceptions about the experience. I would have valued input from administrators, trustees, teachers, peers, and parents/guardians; their views would have given me a more rounded picture.

Positionality, or, to put it less abstractly, "Who I was," as discussed in Chapter 3 may have set up certain obstacles in my study. Having been a professional educator and a trustee could have influenced the type of questions I asked in the survey and interviews and may have influenced the coding of transcripts and the main conclusions I drew from the data. Having conducted a previous study about trustee decision-making in expulsion hearings, I knew many trustees felt expulsions were the hardest thing they had to do. (Dahlgren, 2010). Patton (1990) stated "analysis means grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues" (p. 425). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested there was a need to understand

what was crucial to the dynamics of the individual case and to avoid idly joining cases together for study. Ability to triangulate would enhance the study.

A final limitation is that the state chosen for the study, in the Pacific Northwest, has been cited as the last in the nation for recording longitudinal data, especially graduation and dropout data (Zubrzycki, 2012). The main source for expulsion and suspension records is through the Safe & Drug Free Schools Year End Report—a web-based annual incident account providing a summary of incident data reported in this state's school districts. However, the responsibility to accurately report incidents rests with school administrators and each school district determines its own threshold for reporting expellable incidents such as violence, drug abuses, assault, distribution, and weapons on campus (McCarter, 2008). The report is also tied to state cigarette and lottery tax revenue; districts receiving this money tend to have some dropout and drug prevention programs and training supported by these funds. Thus, that data might not be accurate due to the subjective reporting of incidents.

Contract violation incidents were not separated and I did not acknowledge the fact that a student could be expelled once for more than one reason. If any of these happened, raw data would be skewed. I gave equal weight to each expulsion incident.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study indicate a need for further research in the following areas:

1. Longitudinal study: additional research is needed to understand the long-term effects of expulsion. A longitudinal study that tracks the journeys of expelled students would be helpful.

2. Continue the study using annual reports detailing basic trends. Improvement

    to school reporting practices and a serious state commitment to data analysis

    and publication would enhance this type of study.

3. Emphasize the quantitative data with a larger sample. Do more cross

    tabulations featuring gender and ethnicity, and age-difference responses.

4. Create a case study where all voices are heard. Include viewpoints of

    trustees, administrators, parents, and students.

5. Add to the original study interviews with mothers of the expelled students.

6. Replicate the study but change the timing of data collection. Design the study

    to develop interview questions after the survey answers are analyzed.

7. Compare expulsion data from another district of equal demographics and

    student population.

EPILOGUE

It is with deep appreciation that I thank the unnamed district in this research for letting me study their expelled students. The superintendent and school board's encouragement gave me the time and support to investigate this disenfranchised and at-risk group of students. Studies like this that I have encountered are usually taken in a second hand fashion from blogs, student advocacy groups, and state reports. Also, high profile incidents are often reported in the media, whereas good stories about achievement, unique projects, and wonderful teaching are left to assumptions without publicity.

Many of the students' suggestions, particularly about opportunities to attend an alternative school and an ability to keep up with schoolwork at an off campus center, have already been implemented with some success. This district puts a high priority on educating the whole child. I understand the district well enough to know that its leaders will read this study, and use some of its findings to "educate the whole child." They understand these words:

> In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all…. (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, 1954)

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edweek&utm_source=fb&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=mrss

APPENDIX A.1

Invitation Letter

Julie Dahlgren

Box 4402, Ketchum, ID 83340

December 12, 2010

Dear [Student]:

I, along with my advisor (William Parrett, PhD), am conducting a study called *From Expulsion to Success*. This study will be part of my research to complete a doctorate at Boise State University's College of Education. Dr. Parrett and I would like to involve you in our study. My role in this study is a graduate student doing research.

I am writing to ask your help in a study of expelled students. This study is part of an effort to learn what helps expelled students return to school after expulsion in order to graduate on time. However, if you did not graduate, that information is just as important such as earning a GED, receiving a diploma from another school, postponing graduation, or dropping out.

Results from the survey will be useful in helping school personnel design programs, offer support for your absence from school, and redesign expulsion policies.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any survey questions that you feel are too personal. The follow up interview is optional and you do not have to participate.

Your answers are completely confidential and will be released only as summaries in which no individual's answers can be identified.

You can help us very much by taking a few minutes to share your experiences and thoughts on the survey. Please, also, sign the adult consent (or teen assent) form I have enclosed. I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope and $5.00 as a way of saying thanks for your help. There is also a place for you to check if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview and/or receive the results of the survey.

Thank you for helping with this important study! If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Julie Dahlgren	William Parrett, PhD
(Graduate Student, Boise State University)	Center for School Improvement
(208) 726-2505	Boise State University
juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu	(208) 425-4343
	wparrett@boisestate.edu

PS I know the holiday times are so busy, but I would appreciate you returning the **questionnaire and consent form** before **Christmas**. A sincere thanks to you and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

APPENDIX A.2

Consent Letter

CONSENT FORM
(From Expulsion to Success Research Study)
For participants 18 years and older.

I, _____, am taking part in a research study about student expulsions, *From Expulsion to Success* under the direction of Julie Dahlgren and William Parrett.

I am taking part because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time I want and nothing will happen to me if I want to stop.

The project has two parts: (1) a survey and (2) an interview. Please initial below what you will be doing. Remember, this is **voluntary** participation in a research study so do what you feel like doing. Please initial "yes" for participation or "no" for not participating.

(yes)   (no)

_____   _____   taking the questionnaire

_____   _____   interview where Julie Dahlgren will ask you a few questions about
                 your expulsion experience and returning to school.

_____   _____   audiotaping the interview

_____   _____   receive results of the study

_____   _____
Signature   Date

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH (208-426-5401)

APPENDIX B.1

Parent Letter

Student/Parent Letter

Boise State University
Date

Dear _____,
        Parent/Guardian

William Parrett, PhD and I (Julie Dahlgren, MA) from Boise State University's College of Education are conducting a study called "From Expulsion to Success." This study will be part of my research to complete a doctorate. Dr. Parrett and I
would like to involve your child in our study.

This study is in two parts. The first is a two-page survey. The second is a volunteer follow-up recorded interview, if your child would like to participate. The questionnaire will be mailed to you and your child and can be completed at home. Arrangements will be made for the interview at a convenient time and place, if your child wishes to participate.

All information will remain completely confidential. No child will be identified by name. You are able to remove your child from the study at any time. Only Dr. Parrett and I will have access to the surveys and interview tapes. They will remain locked for three years (per federal regulations) and then destroyed. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publication that may result from the study.
All data is passcode protected.

There will be no direct benefit to your child from participating in this study. However, the information gained from this research may help education professionals better understand how expulsion affects resumption of education.

There are no costs to you or your child as a result of taking part in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, contact the principal investigator, Julie Dahlgren, at (208) 726-2505/juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu or Dr. William Parrett, Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, (208) 426-4343/wparrett@boisestate.edu.

If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (208) 426-5401 or be writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise, ID 83725-1138.

Should you feel discomfort due to participation in this research, you should contact your health care provider or call the Idaho CareLine at 2-1-1.

Please return the Parent Consent form and Teen Assent form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. I very much look forward to your response and your child's participation in this study.

With appreciation,

Julie Dahlgren
(208) 726-2505
juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu

Enc (2)

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH (208-426-1574).

Julie Dahlgren
Box 4402
Ketchum, ID 83340
Date

Dear [Student] and Parents,

I, along with my advisor (William Parrett, PhD), are conducting a study called "From Expulsion to Success." This study will be part of my research to complete my doctorate at Boise State University's College of Education. Dr. Parrett and I would like to involve your child in our study. My role in this study is a graduate student doing research.

This study is in two parts. The first is a two-page survey, which I have included with this invitation. The second is a volunteer follow-up voice recorded interview, if your child would like to participate. Arrangements will be made for the interview at a convenient time and place, if your child wishes to participate and you give consent.

First, know participating in the study is voluntary. The information will be totally confidential. Names are not required on the survey and your student may skip any question s/he does not feel like answering.

All information will remain completely confidential. No child will be identified by name. You are able to remove your child from the study at any time. Only Dr. Parrett and I will have access to the surveys and interview tapes. They will remain locked for three years (per federal regulations) and then destroyed. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publication that may result from the study.
All data is passcode protected.

There will be no direct benefit to your child from participating in this study. However, the information gained from this research may help education professionals better understand how expulsion affects resumption of education.

There are no costs to you or your child as a result of taking part in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, contact the principal investigator, Julie Dahlgren, at (208) 726-2505 juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu or Dr. William Parrett, Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies, (208) 426-4343/wparrett@boisestate.edu.
If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (208) 426-5401 or be writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise, ID 83725-1138.

You can help us very much by taking a few minutes to share your experiences and thoughts on the **Questionnaire**. Please, also, sign the **Parent Consent** and **Teen Ass**ent

form I have enclosed. I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope and $5.00 as a way of saying thanks for your help. There is also a place for you to check if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview and/or receive the results of the survey.

I know the holidays are busy times but would appreciate your response by Dec. 25 2010. Wishing you the very best this holiday season
                                    With appreciation,

                            Julie Dahlgren
                            (208) 726-2505
                                    juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH (208-426-5401).

Parent/Guardian Consent

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I understand that I can choose not to have my child participate in this study, or to withdraw my child from participating at any time. Declining participation will not interfere with my child's care or learning experiences in their classroom.

I will discuss this research study with my child and explain the procedures that will take place.

I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I give my consent to allow my child to participate by answering a questionnaire.

_____
Print Name

_____   _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian   Date

I give consent to allow my child to be voice recorded in an interview.

_____
Print Name

_____   _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian   Date

_____
Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX B.2

Teen Assent Form

TEEN ASSENT FORM
From Expulsion to Success Research Study
For participants 17 years old and younger

I, _____, understand that my parents have given
       (Full Name)
permission for me to take part in a project about student expulsions, "From Expulsion to
Success" Under the direction of Julie Dahlgren and William Parrett.

I am taking part because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time I want and
nothing will happen to me if I want to stop.

I also understand that in no way will participation in this study affect any future hearings
or determinations if I might have to appear in front of the board again.

The project has two parts: (1) a survey and (2) an interview. Please initial below what
you will be doing. Remember, this is **voluntary** participation in a research study so do
what you feel like doing. Please initial "yes" for participation or "no" for not
participating.

(yes)   (no)

_____   _____   taking the questionnaire

_____   _____   interview where Julie Dahlgren will ask you a few questions about
                     your expulsion experience and returning to school.

_____   _____   audiotaping during the interview

_____   _____
Signature   Date

**THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN
RESEARCH (208-426-5401)**

Documentation of Consent

Please initial if you agree to the following:

_____I give consent to be audiotaped during the interview.

_____I will complete the survey, but do not wish to be interviewed.

_____I will not be participating in any part of the study.

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above
Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been
explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX B.3

Assurance of Confidentiality

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name: Julie Dahlgren

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "From Expulsion to Success." I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the research that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices t0 unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX C.1

Spanish Translation of Invitation Letter

Julie Dahlgren
Box 4402
Ketchum, ID 83340

Estimado/a _____,

Le estoy escribiendo para pedir su ayuda en un estudio de estudiantes expulsados. Este estudio es parte de un esfuerzo a aprender que es lo que ayude a los estudiantes a regresar a la escuela después de la expulsión para poder graduarse a tiempo. Sin embargo, si usted no se graduó esa información es tan importante como la graduación, como, por ejemplo, conseguir un GED, recibir un diploma de otra escuela, aplazar la graduación, o abandonar los estudios.

Los resultados de la encuesta serán muy útiles en ayudar al personal escolar a diseñar programas, ofrecer apoyo para su ausencia de la escuela, y rediseñar las pólizas acerca de la expulsión.

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Eso significa que todo el mundo respetará su decisión de que si quisiera estar involucrado en el estudio o no. Si toma la decisión a unirse al estudio ahora, puede cambiar de parecer luego. Si se sienta estresado durante el estudio puede dejarlo en cualquier momento. Puede saltarse cualquier pregunta de la encuesta que en su opinión es demasiado personal. La entrevista de seguimiento es opcional y usted no tiene que participar.

Sus respuestas son completamente confidenciales y serán hecho públicos solamente como resúmenes en los cuales ningunas las respuestas de ningún individuo pueden ser identificados.

Usted puede ayudarnos mucho por gastar algunos minutos para compartir sus experiencias y pensamientos en la encuesta. Yo he adjuntado un sobre autodirigido con franqueo prepagado y un pequeño obsequio como prueba de agradecimiento por su ayuda. También, hay un espacio donde usted puede elegir si le gustaría participar en una entrevista de seguimiento y/o a recibir los resultados de la encuesta.

Gracias por su ayuda con este estudio importante. Si tiene preguntas, no dude en llamarme.

Atentamente,

Julie Dahlgren
(Estudiante postgrado, Boise State University)

(208) 726-2505
juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu

APPENDIX C.2

Spanish Translation of Adult Consent Form

El FORMULARIO DEL CONSENTIMIENTO
(Desde la expulsión al éxito)
Para los participantes que tienen 18 años o mas.

Yo, _____, estoy participando en un proyecto
       (nombre y apellido)
acerca de las expulsiones estudiantiles, "Desde la expulsión al éxito" debajo la dirección
de Julie Dahlgren y William Parrett.

Estoy participando porque quiero participar. Me han dicho que puedo dejar de participar
en cualquier momento, y que no habrán consecuencias si yo no quiero continuar.

El proyecto tiene dos partes: (1) un cuestionario y (2) una entrevista. Por favor, abajo,
iniciala cómo participara en este estudio. Recuerda, vuestra participación en este estudio
es voluntaria. Sólo participar cuando tiene ganas de participar. Por favor, initiala "sí"
para cada parte tiene ganas de participar y "no" para las partes que no quiere hacer.

(sí)   (no)

_____   _____ haré el questionario

_____   _____ participaré en una entrevista con Julie Dahlgren, y contesté a las
                  preguntas sobre mi expulsión y mi regreso a la escuela.

_____   _____ permitiré que la entrevista fuera grabada

_____   _____ quiero recibir los resultados de este estudio

_____   _____
Firma   Fecha

**ESTE PROYECTO HA SIDO REVISADO POR EL CONSEJO DE REVISIÓN
INSTITUCIONAL DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE BOISE STATE PARA LA
PROTECCIÓN DE LOS PARTICIPANTES HUMANOS EN LA
INVESTIGACIÓN (208-426-5401)**

APPENDIX C.3

Spanish Translation of Parent Letter

Julie Dahlgren
Box 4402
Ketchum, ID 83340

Estimado/a _____,
                                    Padre

Yo sé que la expulsión de su hijo/a del distrito escolar del condado de Blaine es un tema delicado. Como miembro de la junta administrativa, yo participé en la decisión. También, yo soy un estudiante de postgrado en la Universidad de Boise State diseñando un estudio de investigaciones para determinar que tan profundamente una expulsión puede hacer sufrir o ayudar un estudiante a continuar a graduarse a tiempo. Estoy buscando las opiniones de los estudiantes y sus percepciones de la expulsión y los factores que les ayudaron a regresar a la escuela.

Primero, sepa que la participación en el estudio es voluntaria. La información será totalmente confidencial. No se requieren los nombres en la encuesta y su hijo/a puede saltarse cualquier pregunta a la cual no quisiera responder.

Gracias por hablar de eso con su estudiante.

El formulario de consentimiento para adolescentes está adjuntado para la participación voluntaria. Por favor, me lo regrese tan pronto que sea posible en el sobre con franqueo prepagado con su permiso para la participación. Comuníquese conmigo en cualquier momento si tiene más preguntas.

Nuestra meta es que todos los estudiantes salgan del distrito escolar del condado de Blaine con las aptitudes para asistir a la universidad o adquirir las aptitudes para trabajar en el siglo 21. Yo se que una interrupción de este proceso debido a una expulsión puede retrasar un estudiante de la graduación.

Un sincero agradecimiento,

Julie Dahlgren
Estudiante postgrado de la Universidad de Boise State
juliedahlgren@u.boisestate.edu
(208) 726-2505

ESTE PROYECTO HA SIDO REVISADO POR EL CONSEJO DE REVISIÓN INSTITUCIONAL DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE BOISE STATE PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS PARTICIPANTES HUMANOS EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN (208-426-1574)

APPENDIX C.4

Spanish Translation of Teen Assent Form

EL FORMULARIO DEL CONSENTIMIENTO PARA LOS ADOLESCENTES

Yo, _____, entiendo que mis padres hayan
      (nombre y apellido)
dado permiso para que yo participara en un proyecto acerca de las expulsiones
estudiantiles, "Desde la expulsión al éxito" debajo la dirección de Julie Dahlgren y
William Parrett.

Estoy participando porque quiero participar. Me han dicho que puedo dejar de participar
en cualquier momento, y que no habrán consecuencias si yo no quiero continuar.

El proyecto tiene dos partes: (1) un cuestionario y (2) una entrevista. Por favor, abajo,
iniciala cómo participara en este estudio. Recuerda, vuestra participación en este estudio
es voluntaria. Sólo participar cuando tiene ganas de participar. Por favor, initiala "sí"
para cada parte tiene ganas de participar y "no" para las partes que no quiere hacer.

  (sí)   (no)

_____   _____ haré el questionario

_____   _____ participaré en una entrevista con Julie Dahlgren, y contesté a las
                              preguntas sobre mi expulsión y mi regreso a la escuela.

_____   _____ permitiré que la entrevista fuera grabada

_____   _____ quiero recibir los resultados de este estudio

_____   _____
Firma   Fecha

**ESTE PROYECTO HA SIDO REVISADO POR EL CONSEJO DE REVISIÓN
INSTITUCIONAL DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE BOISE STATE PARA LA
PROTECCIÓN DE LOS PARTICIPANTES HUMANOS EN LA
INVESTIGACIÓN (208-426-1574)**

APPENDIX D

Spanish Survey Instrument

CUESTIONARIO

1. Yo fui expulsado/a de la escuela porque _____

   _____

2. Yo regresé a la escuela después de _____ meses.

3. Favor de elegir una respuesta.
   a) Yo me gradué con mi clase de la [High School]
   b) Yo me gradué con mi clase de [Alternative School]
   c) Yo conseguí un certificado de constancia de estudios equivalentes de preparatoria
      (Graduate Equivalency Diploma o "GED").
   d) Yo me gradué de otra escuela. Nombre _____
   e) Yo me gradué de una escuela virtual/por el internet. Nombre _____
   e) Yo no tuve créditos suficientes para graduarme a tiempo, pero me gradué luego.
   f) Yo abandoné los estudios.
   g) Me convertí en papa/mama.
   h) Otra _____

Direcciones: Favor de elegir una clasificación para cada declaración.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Completamente de acuerdo	**De acuerdo**	**Neutral**	**En desacuerdo**	**Completamente en desacuerdo**

4. ¿Fue justa su expulsión? 1 2 3 4 5

5. ¿Qué le motivó a regresar a la escuela?
   a) padre/tutor 1 2 3 4 5
   b) un programa en lo cual estuve 1 2 3 4 5
   c) un(as) par(es) 1 2 3 4 5
   d) un(os) mentor(es) 1 2 3 4 5
   e) un/a(s) (maestro/a(s) 1 2 3 4 5
   f) administrador (como director o director asistente) 1 2 3 4 5
   g) consejero (fuera de la escuela) 1 2 3 4 5
   h) agente de libertad vigilada 1 2 3 4 5
   i) una oportunidad a regresar a una escuela alternativa 1 2 3 4 5
   i) otra _____ 1 2 3 4 5

   ¿Qué o quién fue la razón principal que regresó usted a la escuela?
   _____

6. Las pólizas de disciplina del distrito escolar 1 2 3 4 5
   del condado de [County] son justos.

7. Tolerancia Cero para las armas/las pistolas   1   2   3   4   5
   en la escuela es justo.

8. La póliza de drogas, alcohol, y distribución   1   2   3   4   5
   de sustancias ilegales del nivel II es justo.
   (Expulsión automática).

¡Muchas gracias por completar esta encuesta! Esta información es valiosa y confidencial.

Si tiene interés en participar en una entrevista de seguimiento voluntaria de 15 minutos, por favor deje su nombre y la mejor manera para comunicarse consigo. También, si le gustaría los resultados del estudio, por favor deje su información de contacto.

Nombre _____

Contactos: Número de teléfono _____
           Correo electrónico_____
           Dirección postal _____

Mejores tiempos _____

Yo agradezco mucho su participación en este estudio. No dude en comunicarse conmigo en cualquier momento.

Atentamente,

Julie Dahlgren
Estudiante postgrado de la Universidad de Boise State
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APPENDIX E

Spanish Script of Interview Questions

Preguntas de la entrevista estudiantil

Declaración de apertura: Te voy a hacer algunas preguntas acerca de tu expulsión. Si no te acuerdas cualquier cosa o si algo no tiene sentido, por favor, di que eso es el caso. Tengo interés en tus percepciones y quiero que tú sepas que tus respuestas no son correctas ni incorrectas. No te vamos a identificar en este estudio. Si está bien contigo, yo quisiera grabar nuestra conversación. Si no está bien, yo voy a escribir tus respuestas. Tú puedes parar la entrevista en cualquier momento. ¿Estás listo/a?

Las primeras tres preguntas se tratan de la graduación.

1. ¿En qué grado estás o ya te graduaste?
2. ¿De cuál escuela te graduaste?
3. ¿Te graduaste con tu clase?

Las próximas preguntas se tratan de las experiencias antes de la expulsión.

4. ¿Cómo era tu experiencia escolar antes de la expulsión?
5. Cuéntame de los eventos específicos que precedieron el incidente que fue la causa de la expulsión.
6. ¿Asististe una audiencia informal de la expulsión? De ser así, ¿Quién la asistió y porque piensas que no tuvo éxito?
7. ¿Cuál era la razón que te expulsaron?
8. ¿Sabías algo del proceso de expulsión antes de esta expulsión?
9. ¿Te sentiste que la decisión era justa?
10. ¿Se discutieron contigo las opciones para la colocación educacional? De ser así, ¿Cuáles eran las opciones?

Las últimas preguntas se tratan de las experiencias después de la expulsión.

11. ¿Desde esta expulsión, ha cambiado algo en tu vida?
12. ¿Cómo era regresar a la escuela?
13. ¿Qué o quién fue la ayuda más grande en tu regresión a la escuela? (Por ejemplo, ¿fue un padre, un par/amigo, un programa, una decisión personal, etc.?)
14. ¿Qué es lo que te gustaría que el distrito escolar del condado de Blaine haga en ayudarte a tener éxito en la escuela?

APPENDIX F

Behavior and Discipline Policy

Policy Title:	Adoption Date
Behavior and Discipline	8/14/90
Expulsion Prevention	Policy Number 507.10

District personnel shall enforce provisions of the student code of conduct so that students demonstrating unacceptable behavior and their parents, guardians or legal custodians understand that such behavior shall not be tolerated and shall be dealt with according to the code.

It is the belief of the Board that all available alternatives should be explored to help students who are at risk of expulsion before expulsion becomes a necessary step. Expulsion shall be regarded as a punishment of last resort. The principal of each school shall work with the professional staff to identify students who are at risk of suspension or expulsion. Among those students who may be at risk are those who have been or are likely to be declared habitually truant or habitually disruptive.

The District, working with the student's parent/guardian, shall provide students who are identified as "at risk" of suspension or expulsion with support services to help them avoid expulsion.

The failure of the School District to identify a student for participation in an expulsion prevention program or the failure of such program to remediate a student's behavior shall not be grounds to prevent school personnel from proceeding with appropriate disciplinary measures.

APPENDIX G

Prohibited Substance Behavior Discipline Procedure

Policy Title:	Revised Date
Behavior and Discipline	8/14/07
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Prohibited Substances	Policy Number 507.3

It is the policy of the district to promote a safe & healthy environment for our students to grow into productive citizens. To this end, we seek to prevent and prohibit the possession, use, sale, distribution, and/or intent to distribute alcohol, tobacco, or any Prohibited Substance, defined as including, but not limited to: illegal or abused inhalants, performance enhancement substances, mood-altering or psycho-active substances, abused or controlled chemicals or substances. Individuals under the influence, using, in possession of, selling, distributing or intending to sell or distribute alcohol, tobacco, or any Prohibited Substance on school property or at a school sponsored event, shall be considered in violation of this policy. This applies to student vehicles on school property as well as any school-sponsored function.

The principal of each school will be responsible for the development of additional procedures unique to his/her building and community within the parameters of the District-wide policies and procedures.

VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE

Any student who voluntarily discloses using or being under the influence of any illegal inhalant, alcohol, or controlled mood-altering chemical, or abused chemical substance, or tobacco use before he or she is reasonably suspicioned to be in violation of the law, shall be provided anonymity to the extent that disclosure is held confidential on a faculty "need to know" basis, that notification is provided to parents, the legal guardian or child's custodian, and that available counseling may be suggested by the District. Voluntary disclosure will not be abused.

REASONABLE SUSPICION WITHOUT SELF-DISCLOSURE

Once a student is reasonably suspected to be in violation of this policy, regardless of any previous voluntary disclosure, school administrators shall immediately initiate the procedures herein.

EDUCATION SEGMENTS

Violation and consequences of the above policy will be cumulative and unique to each section through three segments of the child's education. These segments are determined as K-5, 6-8, 9-12. Violations occurring in one section do not carry over; however, predetermined suspension or expulsion will carry over.

Revised 8/14/07
Revised 8/13/02

APPENDIX H

Behavior Contract

Student Behavior Contract

1) No tardies;

2) No truancies;

3) A good faith effort to do well in all classes;

4) No intimidation or harassment of students or staff;

5) No consumption or possession of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or other prohibited/illegal substances;

6) No gang activity;

7) No vandalism;

8) Be respectful of other students and staff members;

9) Must comply with all current and future District rules, regulations, and policies; and

10) The Board expects 100% compliance with this Student Behavior Contract.

11) If you violate the contract, you will immediately go before the Board of Trustees in a formal Expulsion Hearing.

APPENDIX I

Informal Hearing Procedure

INFORMAL EXPULSION HEARING PROCEDURE

I.   Introductions of Hearing Officer, student and others present (and relationship to student)

II.   Inform parents and student of the right to counsel and a CD recording of the Hearing

III.   Principal/Assistant Principal: Background on student, if necessary

IV.   Student Questions - (student is _____ years old)
    A.   Why are you here?
    B.   What is the rule?
    C.   Why do you suppose we have this rule?
    D.   Did you have knowledge of the consequences for breaking this rule?
        1) Did your Principal/Assistant Principal explain those consequences?
    E.   What were the consequences for breaking the rule?

V.   Parent Questions
    A.   What do you want for your child?
    B.   Do you want your child in school?
    C.   Are you interested in a process to get him/her back in school?

VI.   Student Process
    A.   Are you willing to make a plan?
    B.   Are you willing to negotiate with each of your teachers to get back into class?
    C.   Are you willing to meet with _____ each week for _____ weeks to discuss your progress?
    D.   Is there a person at _____ you could meet with for a few minutes daily to discuss your progress?
    E.   Behavior Contract between student and school (modify as necessary for student)

      Typical Behavior Contract

      1)   No tardies;
      2)   No truancies;
      3)   A good faith effort to do well in all classes;
      4)   No intimidation of students or staff;
      5)   No consumption or possession of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or other prohibited substances;
      6)   No gang activity;
      7)   No vandalism;

        8)   Be respectful of other students and staff members;

        9)   Must comply with all current and future District rules, regulations, and policies; and

        10)   If you violate the contract, you will immediately go before the Board of Trustees in a Formal Expulsion Hearing.

    F.   Principal/Assistant Principal will send completed/signed Behavior Contract to Board Clerk for inclusion in student's Expulsion Hearing file.

VII.   Adjourn

APPENDIX J

State Code for Fair Hearing

Idaho Code 33-205
Amended 7/1/98

Title 33
Education
Chapter 2
Attendance at Schools

33-205 DENIAL OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE. The board of trustees may deny enrollment, or may deny attendance at any of its schools by expulsion, to any pupil who is an habitual truant, or who is incorrigible, or whose conduct in the judgment of the board, is such as to be continuously disruptive of school discipline, or of the instructional effectiveness of the school, or whose presence in a public school is detrimental to the health and safety of other pupils, or who has been expelled from another school district in this state or any other state. Any pupil having been denied enrollment or expelled may be enrolled or readmitted to the school by the bard f trustees upon such reasonable conditions as may be prescribed by the board; but such enrollment or readmission shall not prevent the board from again expelling such pupil for cause.

Provided however, the board shall expel from school for a period of not less than one (1) year, twelve (12) calendar months, or may deny enrollment to, a student who has been found to have carried a weapon or firearm on school property in this state or any other state, except that the board may modify the expulsion or denial of enrollment order on a case-by-case basis. Discipline of students with disabilities shall be in accordance with the requirements of federal law part B of the individuals with disabilities education act and section 504 of the rehabilitation act. An authorized representative of the board shall report such student and incident to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

No pupil shall be expelled nor denied enrollment without the board of trustees having first given written notice to the parent or guardian of the pupil, which notice shall state the grounds for the proposed expulsion or denial of enrollment and the time and place where such parent or guardian may appear to contest the action of the board to deny school attendance, and which notice shall also state the rights of the pupil to be represented by counsel, to produce witnesses and submit evidence on its own behalf, and to cross-examine any adult witnesses who may appear against him. Within reasonable period of time following such notification, the board of trustees shall grant the pupil and his parents or guardian a full and fair hearing on the proposed expulsion or denial of enrollment. However, the board shall allow a reasonable period of time between such notification and the holding of such hearing to allow the pupil and his parents or guardian to prepare their response to the charge. Any pupil who is within the age of compulsory attendance, who is expelled or denied enrollment as herein provided, shall come under the purview of the youth rehabilitation law, and an authorized representative of the board shall file a petition with the magistrate division of the district court of the county of the pupil's residence, in such form as the court may require under the provision of section 16-1807 Idaho Code.

The superintendent of any district or the principal of any school may temporarily suspend any pupil for disciplinary reasons or for other conduct disruptive of good order or of the instructional effectiveness of the school. A temporary suspension by the principal shall not exceed five (5) school days in length: and the school superintendent may extend the temporary suspension and additional ten (10) school days. Provided, that on a finding by the board of trustees that immediate return to school attendance by the temporarily suspended student would be detrimental to other pupils' health welfare or safety, the board of trustees may extend the temporary suspension for an additional five (5) school days. Prior to suspending any student, the superintendent or principal shall grant an informal hearing on the reasons for the suspension and the opportunity to challenge those reasons. Any pupil who has been suspended may be readmitted to the school by the superintendent or principal who suspended him upon such reasonable conditions as said superintendent or principal may prescribe. The board of trustees shall be notified of any temporary suspensions, the reasons therefore, and the response if any, thereto.

The board of trustees of each school district shall establish the procedure to be followed by the superintendent and the principals under its jurisdiction for the purpose of effecting a temporary suspension, which procedure must conform to the minimal requirement of due process.

APPENDIX K

Dahlgren, J. (2010). Expulsion: A decision that could change a student's future. *Slate*, *28*(1).

APPENDIX L

Alternate Setting Center

Alternate Settings Center (ASC)

Teacher Responsibilities
- Provide any/all class work for students, as requested, in a timely manner
- Participate in conferencing, if requested

ASC Teacher Responsibilities
- Provide structure for In-School Suspension students with the opportunity to maintain or catch up on class work so that they have a chance for successful re-integration into classes.
- Communicate with classroom teachers regarding student assignments
- Plan/coordinate curriculum, lessons, consultation and group/individualized instruction
- Report student attendance to administrators
- Make periodic reports to the school board on student attendance, progress and cooperation.
- The center teacher will advocate before the school board and/or administration when the student is ready to return to a more regular school setting and has meet expectations
- Keep data for the Discipline Report required by State Department of Education
- Facilitate conferences as appropriate

Administrator Responsibilities
- Contact ASC teacher before a student will be arriving or when homebound services are needed
- Provide ASC teacher with "Alternate Settings Center Entry Form" BEFORE student arrives at ASC
- Provide student with ASC brochure and review expectations with student
- Contact parent; provide brochure, if possible
- Contact teachers, requesting student work when appropriate
- Support ASC and ISS teacher as with any other classroom regarding infractions/insubordination
- Participate in conferencing, if requested

What is it?
The Alternate Settings Center (**ASC**) provides an array of services to students who are unable to attend their regular educational setting due to short or long term exclusion from school related to disciplinary issues or homebound instruction due to accident or illness extending over 10 days.

Mission:
To provide a safe and nurturing environment in which students are given the opportunity to develop the academic, behavioral and social skills necessary to be successful in the regular educational setting.

"Own it. Fix it. Move on."

Where is the ASC located?
Community Campus

What are the Alternate Settings Center Hours?
Students in Expulsion
- 9:00-12:00
- Transportation is student/parent responsibility
- No lunches provided

Students in Suspension
- 8:30-3:30
- Students may ride the bus as usual unless there is an infraction
- Students may bring a lunch or arrangements will be made to purchase lunch from the school cafeteria on student's account

Students in Homebound
- by appointment

Student Responsibilities
- Arrive on time
- Report directly to ASC or to WRHS main office if directed
- Follow WRHS dress code
- Follow computer use guidelines
- Cooperate with the Alternate Settings Center Teacher
- Follow your contract and all school rules
- Participate in required activities and conferences
- Discuss strategies for "Responsible Thinking"
- Complete class work as time allows
- Ask for help when necessary
- Deposit cell phones and iPods with Alternate Settings Center Teacher for safekeeping when you arrive at ASC
- Give all completed assignments to ASC teacher to be returned

Parent Responsibilities
- Make sure that your student has arrangements for lunch and transportation
- Ensure that your student understands the conditions of the suspension or expulsion
- Check Skyward grades frequently
- Help your student fulfill community service obligations, if needed
- Participate in conferencing, if requested