

PUSHED OUT OR KEPT IN: HOW AN
ALTERNATIVE TO SUSPENSION INFLUENCES
STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVMENT

By

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I really never thought the day would come to write the acknowledgments for this book that I have written. I have proven with this document that a math minded person who hates to write can accomplish anything! BUT it would not have been doable without the support of so many people along the way. I cannot begin to thank the number of people who has encouraged, cheered and supported me along the way for fear of leaving someone out, yet I must acknowledge a few.

Melissa, Rachel, Harriett, Kristen, Angela and all of the other staff and students who helped me get to this point. Thank you for the constant encouragement as we traveled along this program journey together. It has had ups and downs but because of your commitment to kids, this program is now in the books and can be shared with others. Each of you are the real rock stars of this program! Thank you is not enough for all you have done. Sandie, a special shout out to you for doing it all from the frontlines in the office in the beginning. Your support and friendship means the world to me and just like this program, I hope it is long lasting with all of the laughs and tears we have shared along the journey. Here's too many more years of friendship and fun.

Finally, to my Family. Matt you are the best husband one could ask for. Doing this degree with you has been a great ride. Thank you for the constant encouragement and motivation along the way. YOU ARE NEXT!! To my brother Andy and niece Kaylee, it is time to barbecue! I love you for always being in my corner and never thinking that this would not happen, even when I did. To my sister, Abby, here is your shout out in the credits. Thanks for always reading this when I could not look at it any more. I love you and thank you for all of your support, distractions and encouragement. To Mom, Anita, WE are done! Thank you for the constant re-reads and never ending edits. I could thank you for so much more but no time for tears. Without each of you, this definitely would not be happening! Love you all lots.

Name: AMY RICHAN MCCREADY

Date of Degree: DECEMBER, 2020

Title of Study: PUSHED OUT OR KEPT IN: HOW AN ALTERNATIVE TO
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ACADEMIC ACHIEVMENT

Major Field: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. More specifically, this case study examines student experiences in a program being implemented in a Midwestern state, an alternative to suspension named Graduation Reboot (not an acronym). This study used purposeful sampling to select participants for this study. Data were collected through classroom observations, surveys, interviews of two administrators, three teachers and five students who have had a relationship with Graduation Reboot and other documents. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (1959) provided a lens through which to present and analyze the findings of this study. Findings confirmed caring, communication, consistency and celebrations should be included in an alternative to suspension program to influence academic progress and behavior changes. Additional research could focus on other alternative-to-suspension programs with a higher enrolment of students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Schools across the United States are challenged with the responsibility to promote success for all students (NCLB, 2002 ESSA, 2017). However, in a 2006 *TIME* cover story entitled *Dropout Nation*, Nathan Thornburgh stated that “nearly 1 out of 3 public high school students will not graduate” (p. 1). He goes on to explain, “virtually no community, small or large, rural or urban, has escaped the problem” (p. 2). This situation is capturing the attention of educational leaders and policy makers (Brown & Beckett, 2006; DeRidder, 1991; D’Angelo & Zemanik, 2009; Knesting & Skiba, 2001), and an increased understanding of ways to keep students in school has gained enhanced attention in educational research (Balfanz et al., 2013; Bridgeland et al., 2009; Brownstein, 2010).

While there is not an official definition for “dropout,” the term usually refers to a student who has quit attending school before meeting graduation requirements. Life-long problems occur when a student drops out of school. For example, “among recent dropouts, 16% are unemployed and 32% live below the poverty line” (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013, p. 55). Other researchers have identified additional consequences for students when they drop out, including joining gangs, committing acts of violence and, as a result, becoming incarcerated (Rumberger, 1987). Equally detrimental consequences of

dropping out are increased incidence of depression, increased use of drugs and alcohol, and increased possibility of being incarcerated (Aloise-Young & Chavez, 2002).

Reasons for students ending their high school careers early are plentiful. A report by Hemmer et al. (2013) suggested reasons for students dropping out include lack of parental involvement, home instability, boredom, lack of academic preparation, and absenteeism. Bridgeland et al. (2009) suggested, “causes such as negative influence of peers not interested in school, needing to get a job to make money, becoming a parent and caring for a family member” (p. 23) are additional reasons for a student leaving school early. Other researchers have suggested factors such as ethnicity, poverty, parent educational background, or location of a student’s residence may be related to dropping out (Pruett et al., 2000).

To help reduce the number of students dropping out of school, educational institutions have turned to alternative school settings as a means to reengage students who struggle in traditional classroom environments. Various educational options, such as independent study programs, charter schools, and schools-within-schools (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002) have all been classified as “alternative settings” for students who are at risk of not completing high school. Because alternative education has evolved over the years and because the term has been applied to such a wide variety of alternative options for students, a common definition of an alternative school is difficult to determine for most educators (Lehr et al., 2009). What is consistent across all alternative settings is that “alternative schools appear to be serving students with multiple needs who are not successful in traditional schools” (Lehr et al., 2009).

Not only are alternative schools varied in their approach to supporting student success, they often look outside the school district to connect student with resources for support (Cobb, 2002). The alternative setting is changing as schools are beginning to do their part to alleviate barriers to completing a high school education by participating in partnerships that help meet the various personal needs of students. Sometimes simple needs of students can be met by schools. For example, a partnership between a large, urban Pennsylvania school district and Comcast communications provides discounted internet service for families so students may complete required online work at home (Philadelphia School District, 2017). Another available resource to promote attendance in some schools is the use of free city bus passes for full-time students (Cobb, 2002).

While it is honorable for schools to help ease physical and emotional obstacles so that students may attend classes, schools must also look deeper into the causes of students leaving school early (Annamma, 2014; Balfanz et al., 2013; Brown & Beckett, 2006; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014). Research suggests that school practices can actually influence students leaving school early (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Willoughby, 2012). Suspension policies, in particular, can be a driving force in a student dropping out when these policies mandate a student be sent home for inappropriate behavior (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Lee et al., 2011). Despite the intended consequences of this form of discipline, (i.e. teaching students to behave appropriately), unintended consequences can also occur. For example, when a student is sent home, students lose access to valuable instructional time. Furthermore, when students are not in school, they often experience a lowered sense of self-esteem, increased feelings of not being wanted, and alienation from their peers

(Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Menzer & Hampel, 2009).

All of these factors may ultimately lead to student reluctance to return to school once the disciplinary time period is over (Oakland Public Schools, 1992).

Research on Suspension as a Form of Discipline

Most research on suspension has focused more on who is suspended or at what rate a particular ethnic group is suspended (DeRidder 1991; Monroe, 2005; Nesting & Skiba, 2001; Skiba et al., 2011; Welsh, 2000) rather than the effects of suspension on student behavior, academic achievement, or high school completion. However, researchers in the last decade have focused more on the negative consequences of student suspension (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Lee et al., 2011; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). Some researchers focused on students whose behavior is not changed by a suspension (Brownstein, 2010; Michail, 2012; Willoughby, 2012). Others focused on the relationship between suspension and civic disengagement (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014). Still others have focused on natural consequences, such as working low-wage jobs, unwanted pregnancies and even incarceration for students who have been suspended (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014; Rumberger, 1987). Despite new understandings of the effects of suspension on student progress in school, research studying effects of pre or post-suspension support for students is minimal.

School Discipline and Student Success

The purpose of school discipline is to maintain safety and order in schools (Eden, 2019). However, questions often arise concerning whether some actions that schools have taken to maintain an orderly learning environment may actually have negative consequences for the academic progress of some students (Brownstein, 2010).

Brownstein (2010) stated, “While nobody questions the need to keep schools safe, teachers, students, and parents are questioning the methods we are using in pursuit of that goal” (p. 23). While discipline policies and methods are designed to keep everyone in the school environment safe and promote a healthy learning environment, these policies may actually have detrimental effects on at-risk students if they are applied without specifically addressing or understanding the needs of individual students (DeRidder, 1991; Menzer & Hampel, 2009; Suh et al., 2007; Thornburgh, 2006). Specifically, some researchers that have investigated the relationship between school discipline policies and student dropout rates have found an increase in academic failure once a student is suspended (Arcia, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011). For example, Messacar and Oreopoulos (2013) suggested:

Policies that combat early disengagement may prevent at-risk students from falling into a downward spiral in which missing school causes them to fall behind in their studies, which in turn makes them feel even less motivated to attend classes and puts them further behind. (p. 58)

Brownstein’s (2010) work also supports this contention. He wrote, “Students who are repeatedly suspended, or who are expelled, are likely to fall behind their peers academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout” (p. 24). It is important to understand the effect of alternative forms of discipline on student progress. DeRidder (1991) noted, “according to one estimate, dropouts have five times as many serious discipline incidents as students who do not dropout” (p. 44).

A primary idea behind public education is that it can serve as the “grand equalizer” that promotes a pathway for equal opportunities for success beyond high

school. However, discipline policies can promote inequity by causing students who are already falling behind their peers to fall even further behind. Messacar and Oreopoulos (2013) suggested that “skills and educational attainment are increasingly important in today's economy, and individuals with the least education are faring particularly badly” (p. 55). What appears to be happening is that students who are being suspended are the same students who need support for completing their education the most. However, these students often get pushed out of school because they interrupt the educational process with inappropriate behavior (Boylan & Renzulli, 2017). While disciplining students for unsuitable behavior is understandable and necessary, research indicates that the punishment is usually reactive, not proactive, and typically does not allow students to grow from their mistakes (Backman, 2017; Willoughby, 2012).

In *Alternatives to Suspension*, Robinett (2012) stated, “many students engage in non-violent, non-drug offenses and are being suspended for the first time or before other means of correction have been adequately employed” (p. 33). A specific example for Robinett’s claim occurs often when students are given consequences for being truant from school. Messacar and Oreopoulos (2013) explained, “at young ages, truancy is more often related to parental issues” rather than actual student choice or behavior. Additionally, older students may be asked to babysit for younger siblings, causing them to miss school while a parent works. These examples suggest that if a student is sent home as a disciplinary measure for truancy with no conversation with the student or parents concerning motivation for that behavior, the student’s behavior is unlikely to change, and the problem often continues.

Problem statement

Schools have an obligation to keep the learning environment safe and conducive to learning. Because of increased security violations, “schools of all kinds and in all parts of the country have increasingly adopted harsher, more punitive disciplinary policies, such as zero tolerance and mandatory arrest” (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014, p. 96) for discipline infractions that threaten the safety of other students or persons in the school. In *Suspending Hope*, Brian Willoughby (2012) suggested that these same policies, such as zero tolerance, can quickly become a discipline approach for lesser infractions such as fighting, swearing, smoking and causing disruptions. He also claimed that less severe infractions may result in reactionary disciplinary decisions that do not change student behavior but rather reinforce the bad behavior (p. 54). Brownstein (2010) suggested that “these one-size-fits-all” policies often apply not only to possession of weapons, drugs, and alcohol, but also to possession of medication legitimately prescribed by physicians, school supplies and common objects such as nail clippers and scissors” (p. 24).

The intent of most school suspension programs is to improve behavior and encourage academic progress. However, an anomaly exists because, for some students, suspension reinforces bad behavior as opposed to changing a behavior or encouraging a more acceptable behavior (Brownstein, 2010), and suspension may actually hinder, rather than promote, academic growth for suspended students. One potential reason for problems associated with mandatory suspension programs may be that suspension, as a means of disciplinary behavior for non-violent or non-drug related offenses, may actually serve to detach students from the school, resulting in diminished academic success and lack of motivation to finish their degree. However, alternatives to suspension programs exist that could meet both objectives of schools: improving student behavior and

promoting academic growth. For example, many schools are using alternatives to suspensions and attempting to intervene, rather than react, when a specific behavior is presented (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2012; Smith et al., 2002). However, little is known about administrator, teacher and student perceptions concerning the influence of these alternatives on student motivation to change behavior, and how these alternative programs influence student learning and progress in fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. More specifically, this case study examines student experiences in a program being implemented in a Midwestern state, an alternative to suspension named Graduation Reboot (not an acronym). Students with existing behaviors such as truancy, previous suspension, multiple failing grades or grade retention qualify for the Graduation Reboot program. Once the characteristics of a potential Graduation Reboot student have presented in some manner at school, recommendations are made by administrators to the Director of Secondary Education to allow placement in the program. Students are then required to attend Graduation Reboot rather than continuing to attend their traditional high school. Graduation Reboot has a small teacher/student ratio, classes off site of the regular school campus, counseling services, and adults who are dedicated to helping at-risk youth. Graduation Reboot includes integrated academic and behavior support prior to student suspensions.

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is:

How does an alternative to suspension program, Graduation Reboot, in a large Midwest urban high school influence motivation for at-risk students to reach academic and behavior goals?

Sub-questions include:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach academic goals?
2. How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach behavior goals?
3. What are teachers and administrators' perceptions about factors of the Graduation Reboot program that motivate students?
4. How do former students, who were at-risk of graduation but completed high school, perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on their motivation to reach academic and behavioral goals?
5. What other realities are present?

Teachers and administrators in a school which utilizes the Graduation Reboot program are the focus of this qualitative case study. For the purpose of triangulation, data was gathered from multiple sources including former students over the age of 18 who have graduated and who were formerly involved in the Graduation Reboot program, past and present Graduation Reboot teachers, administrators' observation of classrooms, suspension program documents (policies and procedures), electronic communication and examination of de-identified suspension data and attendance records. The theoretical

framework of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation is used to explain the findings from this study.

Epistemology and Theoretical Framework

Constructivism is the guiding epistemological perspective for this study. Crotty (1998) defined constructivism as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). For this qualitative case study, interviews with successful former students, teachers and administrators of at-risk students were used to construct meaning of the influence of this program on student motivation for success in school.

Herzberg's Theory of Motivation has been chosen as the theoretical framework to “provide a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked” (Creswell, 2014, p. 51). This qualitative case study uses Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation to explain the findings of this study. Frederick Herzberg is regarded as one of the leading researchers in motivation theory. He spent much of his career as a professor of business, but his most recognized work may be his book *The Motivation to Work* which he wrote with Block, Snydeman, and Mausner in 1959. This book was the first to establish theories connecting motivation and the workplace. Herzberg and his colleagues researched factors in the work environment that caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction among 200 Pittsburg engineers and accountants (Dinibutun, 2012).

During his study, employees were interviewed and asked what happenings in the work-place helped to satisfy each employee during work and what factors made the

individual dissatisfied. Herzberg's findings included a list of motivational and hygiene factors. Examples of Herzberg hygiene factors include: company policies, relationships, personal life, working conditions, etc. Herzberg explained he used hygiene factors as one of the category titles because he felt a direct link to the actual definition of personal hygiene and what individuals need for maintenance in the workplace. He claimed both personal hygiene and workplace needs were similar and both are factors that are needed in order for one to feel satisfied. Herzberg argued the same needs exist in the workplace.

In addition to hygiene factors, Herzberg claimed there are very distinct needs for each individual that fall into physiological or motivational needs. Physiological needs, such as self-actualization, love and safety, are factors that must be in existence for a person to grow and achieve. He explained that each need, both physiological and psychological, must be met for maximum satisfaction to occur. As seen in Figure 1, the hygiene factors listed are mostly external factors. He argued workers may see hygiene and motivational factors as clear incentives to do something or not do something. Finally, with regard to employees, Herzberg shared the idea of being satisfied versus dissatisfied. He suggested that just because one is not satisfied at work does not lead to an automatic assumption that he/she is dissatisfied. Rather, a worker who is not satisfied may or may not be motivated to do their work. For example, an employee may be a good worker; however, he or she may not be motivated to "move up the ladder" in job titles and take on a position with more responsibility. This lack of motivation does not necessarily mean the worker is not satisfied at work but rather his motivations may lie elsewhere. If the worker has a family, responsibilities may not fit within the personal structure of life. Dinibutun (2012) explained that Herzberg emphasized the understanding that "hygiene factors are

not a ‘second-class citizen’ system. They are important as the motivators, but for different reasons” (Herzberg, 1959, as cited in Dinibutun, 2012, p. 134). Although Herzberg’s (1959) theory provides an understanding of employee motivation concerning his/her hygiene and psychological needs in the workplace, it has utility to provide a lens to understand how a student’s involvement in the Graduation Reboot program influences his/her motivation to remain in school. Specifically, it logically follows that students are motivated to persist in their educational endeavors when their physiological and psychological needs are met.

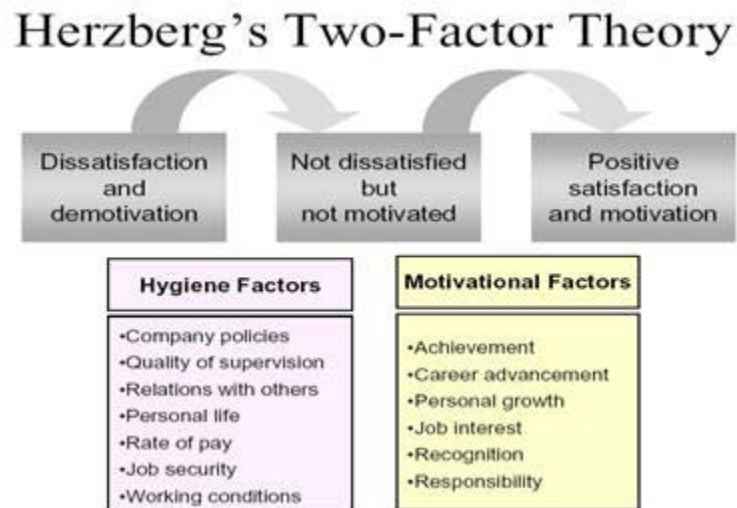


Figure 1. Visual representation of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. Adapted from “Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory,” by NetMBA. Copyright 2010 by the Internet Center for Management and Business Administration.

Methodology

The design of this study is a qualitative case study, rather than quantitative, in order to gain an understanding of the multiple aspects of the influence of the alternative-to-suspension program on student behavior and academic growth. Academic growth, for

this study, does not address specific student performance as indicated on standardized tests or grade point average. Instead, academic growth is defined as a student's ability to remain in school and to continue progress toward high school completion. Data was collected through a variety of sources.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to capture perspectives of successful former students, administrators and teachers of students who are attending this alternative program. Interviews were conducted with former students who have experienced this alternative-to-suspension program and have successfully completed high school graduation requirements. All participants were over the age of 18. Additional data was derived from observation of classrooms, suspension program documents (policies and procedures), electronic communication and examination of de-identified suspension data.

Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, peer debriefing and purposive sampling. Transferability and dependability were established to ensure credibility.

Significance of the Study

Research indicates that programs that focus on student needs, rather than reactionary discipline models, may be far more effective for changing student behavior than suspending students to the home. This assumption is supported in the literature as researchers are discovering a trend in positive educational outcomes for students where alternatives to suspensions are being offered (Brownstein, 2010; D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009; Robinett, 2012). Lehr et al. (2009) indicated the importance of focusing on student needs in disciplinary policy. They asserted, "Meeting the needs of students

disenfranchised from the traditional education system is becoming more and more important as we are faced with a growing population of students for whom status quo education is not successful” (19). Lehr et al. (2009) explained that alternative programs are not a new idea in school systems; however, more and more definitions of alternative education are taking shape. For example, some schools identify at-risk students and intervene in hopes of preventing students from being suspended while others are more reactionary and provide structure and extra behavior and academic support only after students have been suspended. Research suggests students attending alternative schools, typically of choice, show a re-engagement with schools as well as increased grades, improved self-esteem and an overall commitment to school (Cox et al., 1995; Dugger & Dugger, 1998; May & Copeland, 1998; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006; Smith et al., 1981; Tobin et al., 1989).

To Practice

The need for balance between educating every student and protecting the academic atmosphere in a classroom is imperative so all children can learn. It is almost inevitable that some learners are going to be disruptive, but, often, the current system of dealing with those students is ineffective for some and de-motivating for many (Breulin et al., 2006; Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2007). The results of this study could inform school officials concerning the influences of alternative-to-suspension practices for improving behavior and academic success for students in this district. The insight, while not generalizable, could transfer to similar districts with similar contexts and demographics, to promote more effective decisions regarding student discipline for non-violent, non-drug related behavior.

To Research

Existing research has provided an understanding of suspension programs and their influence on a child (D'Angelo & Zemanick, 2009; Grandmont, 2003; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2014; Lee et al., 2011). Additionally, the research has aided educators in their understanding of who is being suspended (Alexander et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2011); however, there is limited understanding on student, teacher and administrator perceptions regarding how alternative-to-suspension programs influence student behavior and academic success. This study contributes to the research by seeking to understand how an alternative-to-suspension program motivates students to persist in reaching educational goals.

Interpreting findings through the lens of Herzberg's Theory of Motivation allows for a new perspective on how additional support influences at-risk students' motivation to continue their education. Looking at what motivates a student may offer other opportunities for research and solutions to helping students be successful in school. This study adds to existing research by providing an understanding of the influence of supportive discipline practices, designed to meet the needs of students, on student motivation and behavior.

To Theory

Results from this research study could add to the current existing research on alternatives to suspension. Although Herzberg's Theory of Motivation (1959) was developed to explain motivation in the workplace, it could also provide an understanding of student motivation to persist in their education when their physiological and psychological needs are met through an alternative-to-suspension program. Few research

studies have applied Herzberg's Theory of Motivation to student learning in schools. Looking at suspensions and additional support for students through the lens of student motivation could provide opportunities to expand previous studies on alternatives to suspension as well as other educational topics using the motivation lens. Furthermore, this research expands an existing theory of motivation and furthers its applicability to an educational setting.

Definition of Terms

Graduation Reboot. An off-site, non-choice intervention program for students who are seniors by status (4th year in high school); yet, have not met the number of credits to be classified as a senior in high school.

Alternatives to Suspensions. Most often referred to in literature as a type of alternative programming in schools. "Alternative education is a means to transform educational experiences of marginalized, disenfranchised youth so that eventually they become contributing members to the social, economic and political structure of the country" (Hemmer et al., 2013)

At-risk student. Any student who encounters barriers to achieving their high school diploma and is not given the tools to learn appropriate actions to deal with the barriers.

High school dropout. Dropout refers to a student that has quit attending school before finishing the requirements and earning a high school diploma.

Intervention. An act applied to a student to improve a skill or behavior.

Student Success. For this study, student success is determined solely by if a student graduates from high school.

Suspension. The consequence of not being allowed to attend regular classes applied to a student in order to maintain order within the learning environment.

Summary and Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provided an introduction to the study and also included a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and the identification of research questions. To better understand the effect of suspension programs on the learning environment, case study methodology was used. Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation guided the discussion of findings from this qualitative study.

Chapter II offers a review of the literature that aids in understanding of the research topic. Specifically, the following topics are addressed: the history and purpose of school discipline, the effects of suspension on students, potential alternatives to suspension programs that exist and how schools define success of a suspended student. Finally, the literature review concludes with an explanation of potential alternatives to current suspension programs that support the learning environment.

Chapter III includes the research methods and procedures applied in this study including participant selection, data collection and data analysis techniques. Researcher background and bias are addressed as well as how access was gained to various suspension programs. Trustworthiness and limitations of the study conclude Chapter III.

Chapter IV presents the data and provides a thick, rich description of programs analyzed as well as who participated in the study. All data collected through interviews, observations, artifacts and field notes are presented in detail. The data was analyzed and

is presented through the lens of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation in Chapter V.

Chapter VI includes implications of the study including the significance of the study to practice, to research, and to theory. Recommendations for future research are provided and conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Key topics discussed in this literature review include: (1) dropout epidemic in the United States; (2) school discipline past and present; (3) suspension as a form of discipline; (4) alternatives to suspension – behavior focus; (5) alternatives to suspension – academic focus; (6) Herzberg’s Theory and the utility of Herzberg’s theory to explain the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on student success. The purpose of the review is to explain research findings regarding: (1) the prevalence and implications of high school dropouts in the United States; (2) school policies and reasons students are dropping out; (3) student motivation for academic and behavior improvement changes while on suspension; and (4) to express the need for the present study.

Dropout Epidemic

Schools across the United States are challenged with the responsibility to promote success for all students, as required by both the No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, 2017). Hemmer et al. (2013) indicated that approximately 1.2 million students in the United States continue to drop out of high school each year. In a *TIME* magazine cover story, *Dropout Nation*, Thornburgh (2006) stated, “Virtually no community, small or large, rural or urban, has

escaped the problem” (p. 2). This dropout epidemic has captured the attention of educational leaders and policy makers (Boylan & Renzulli, 2017; Brown & Beckett, 2006; D’Angelo & Zemanik, 2009; DeRidder, 1991; Knesting & Skiba, 2001), and a better understanding of strategies to keep students in school has gained enhanced attention in educational research.

Characteristics of Dropouts

While there is not an official definition for “dropout,” the term usually refers to a 16-24- year-old student who has quit attending school before finishing the requirements for earning a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED). For many years, researchers have studied intently who is dropping out of school and why students drop out (Boylan & Renzulli, 2017; Paternoster et al., 2003). For many researchers, there is a consensus that boys drop out at a higher rate than their female counterparts.

Researchers have concluded that there are several contributing factors that may explain higher dropout rates among boys. These factors include: boys may work more hours in a job outside of school, they may repeat a grade in school more often than girls, significant academic issues may perpetuate a dislike for school, and boys may be diagnosed with a learning disability more frequently than girls, causing an increased frustration with school (Paternoster et al., 2003).

Other researchers have focused more on what reasons, besides physical characteristics such as gender, race or ethnicity, lead to student dropout (Bottani & Bradshaw, 2016; Knesting & Skiba, 2001;

Peguero et al., (2019). Orfield et al. (2004) found that 43 percent of black males and 48 percent of Latino males graduate on time compared to 77 percent of white males.

Pruett et al. (2000) as well as Burdick-Will (2016) have suggested the ethnicity of a student and factors such as poverty, parent educational background, or location of a student's residence may be related to dropping out. Hemmer et al. (2013) suggested that students may drop out due to lack of parent involvement, home instability, boredom, lack of academic preparation, and absenteeism. Bridgeland et al. (2009) suggested that "causes such as negative influence of peers not interested in school, needing to get a job to make money, becoming a parent and caring for a family member" (p. 23) are additional reasons for a student leaving high school before securing a diploma.

Some school policies may be pushing students out before they finish their degrees. Suspension policies, in particular, appear to be a driving force in a student dropping out when these policies mandate a student be sent home for inappropriate behavior (Boylan & Renzulli, 2017; Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Lee et al., 2011). School practices have the potential to influence students leaving school early (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Willoughby, 2012). Racial disparity exists within the policies and use of the policies, which perpetuates students of color being suspended at a higher rate than their white counterparts (Bottiani et al., 2017; Gregory et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Monroe, 2005). Additionally, gender inequities still exist with school policies and procedures surrounding discipline as male students are suspended at a higher rate than female students (Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace et al., 2008).

School Discipline

Sheets (1996) defined inappropriate behavior as behavior that interferes with the student's own learning and/or the educational process of others. This inappropriate behavior presented by a student requires attention and assistance beyond that which

traditional programs can provide and most often, the inappropriate behavior results in frequent conflicts of a disruptive nature while the student is under the jurisdiction of the school, either in or out of the classroom. “Historically, problem students have been kept after school, paddled or suspended from school during the one-room schoolhouse days” (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 156). Across the United States, more than three million students are suspended from school every year (Planty, et al., 2009), and numerous studies have shown a direct positive link between student behavioral problems and academic failure (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). Despite this finding, schools across the United States are challenged with the responsibility to promote success for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Fenning et al. (2012) explained, “Discipline policies, often termed "codes of conduct," are the written documents that schools use to convey behavioral expectations to the larger school community, including parents, teachers and students” (p. 106). Mendez et al., (2002) wrote:

Suspension is a disciplinary action that is delivered in response to an inappropriate act or behavior, and it usually occurs in the absence of additional interventions focused on teaching or reinforcing students’ more prosocial or appropriate responses to difficult situations. From a theoretical standpoint, the primary goal of suspension is to decrease or eliminate the probability that a student re-commits an offense that is so serious that another referral to the principal’s office or another suspension is necessary. (p. 259)

Yang (2009) compared punishment and discipline and explained that schools use both. He described discipline as “an act of rigorous physical or mental training, a

practice of will that can lead paradoxically to docile compliance or emancipatory possibilities” and punishment as “retribution for an offense” (p. 49). Suspension, on the other hand, has been used to gain the attention of a student who has acted inappropriately for many years (Adams, 2000). No matter what one calls the consequence applied to a student for an inappropriate behavior; punishment, discipline or suspension, the consequence meant to serve as a positive, corrective action have not changed much over time. However, the negative implications for students regarding their academics and behaviors are becoming clearer as researchers have discovered that out-of-school suspensions may do more harm than good and have often been found to not fix the behavior the consequence was intended to address (Alexander et al., 2001; Mendez et al., 2002).

Zero Tolerance

The term *zero tolerance* originated in the 1980s during the war on drugs, and the philosophy of zero tolerance resulted in the arrest of people who were committing minor offenses so they would not commit a larger one (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Teske, 2011). This same concept began to creep in to schools and “by 1993, zero-tolerance policies had been adopted across the country, often broadened to include not only drugs and weapons but also smoking and school disruption” (Knesting & Skiba, 2001, p. 19). In *Suspending Hope*, Willoughby (2012) supported this idea of Knesting and Skiba when he wrote how discipline policies, such as zero tolerance, quickly became a discipline approach for lesser infractions such as fighting, swearing, smoking, and causing disruptions. Brownstein (2010) suggested that “these ‘one-size-fits-all’” policies, aka zero-tolerance policies, often apply not only to possession of weapons, drugs, and alcohol, but also to

possession of medication legitimately prescribed by physicians, school supplies and common objects such as nail clippers and scissors” (p. 24). As schools began using zero tolerance policies and zero tolerance was used for minor infractions, controversy increased as more and more non-traditional offenders were begin suspended (Knesting & Skiba, 2001).

Zero tolerance has been well researched with regards to school discipline (Kajs, 2006; Monterastelli, 2017; Skiba & Nesting, 2001; Teske, 2011). In Teske’s (2001) research, zero tolerance was examined through a lens bearing in mind the reasons for a student’s disruptive behavior and then applying a multi-system approach to improve student educational and behavioral outcomes based on the reasons for the behavior. This idea was a juxtaposition from zero tolerance, in which a behavior happened and a consequence was applied, which is similar to using a rubric with no discussion taking place. Skiba and Nesting (2001) researched zero tolerance through the lens of students who are at-risk for engaging in a disruptive behavior and applying preventive measures versus waiting for the behavior to manifest and then using a zero-tolerance approach after the behavior had occurred.

On the other hand, Kajs (2006) took a more practical approach and used a case study approach to examine alternative approaches for behavior consequences that could be used before zero tolerance is implemented. More specifically, Kajs (2006) referenced three particular case studies that included an honor student, a high school 16-year-old knife collector, and a 13-year-old who were all suspended for having a “weapon” on campus. In each of these instances, students were found to have a “weapon” on campus, but upon further review a common sense approach to discipline could have prevailed. In

all cases Kajs examined, the student's intent to harm or disrupt the educational environment was a non-issue but zero tolerance policies were applied and it was a detriment to the student because the punishment did not fit the crime. Many researchers, including Kajs, have found when a suspension was the consequence assigned for zero-tolerance behavior, common sense was lost on the part of the educators. The "crime" and punishment were not necessarily aligned with the behavior and more harm than good was done to the student (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Kajs, 2006; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Teske, 2011).

Suspension as a Form of Discipline

When other strategies not work to keep order and an appropriate learning environment for all students, suspending a student has been the final attempt to gain control over the student and assure a conducive environment for learning. According to the United States Department of Education (2008), "Out of school suspension is one of the most widely used disciplinary practices in American schools, with more than 3.3 million student suspended each year". Christle, Nelson, and Jolivette (2004) defined suspension as a disciplinary sanction that requires the student to be excluded from the school building for a specified period of time. Some schools suspend through an in-school type program where other behaviors resulted in suspending the student to the home. No matter the suspension type, much of the research is showing that suspension is detrimental to the student, both academically and behaviorally (Hirschfield, 2009; Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Rumberger, 1987; Willoughby, 2012).

Effects of Suspension on Student Behavior

Brownstein (2010) stated, “While nobody questions the need to keep schools safe, teachers, students, and parents are questioning the methods we are using in pursuit of that goal” (p. 23). Despite the intended consequences of suspension being used as a form of discipline, unintended consequences can affect student academics and behavior. For example, when a student is sent home, students lose access to valuable instructional time. Furthermore, when students are not in school, they often gain a lowered sense of self-esteem, increased feelings of not being wanted, and an alienation from their peers (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Menzer & Hampel, 2009). All of these factors may ultimately lead to student reluctance to return to school once the disciplinary time period is over (Oakland Public Schools, 1992).

Furthermore, research in the last decade has focused more on the negative consequences for a student whose behavior has led to suspension as the disciplinary action (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Stearns & Glennie, 2006; Lee et al., 2011). Some researchers have focused on students whose behavior is not changed by a suspension and perhaps has worsened. Michail’s (2012) study concluded the majority of participants being suspended did not lead to any meaningful behavior change. Skiba et al. (2003) summed it up as “the frequent reliance on suspension does not yield the benefits proponents often claim it does, neither for deterrence nor academic achievement” (p. 1).

Effects of Suspension on Academic Growth

Questions often arise concerning whether some actions that schools have taken to maintain an orderly learning environment may actually have negative consequences for the academic progress of some students (Brownstein, 2010; Burdick-Will, 2016). Missing school means missing instruction and researchers have focused mainly on the lack of

academic achievement for a student while suspended. Often during a suspension, a student loses academic time, which creates frustration so they do not want to come back (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013, p. 57). Similarly, a 1992 commissioned report for Oakland Public Schools found “students who are asked to leave school for a short time may stay out” (p. 8). Perry and Morris (2016) stated when a student is suspended, a strong correlation exists with lower academic achievements of students who are suspended and suggesting that their “findings provide support for the theory that a culture of control in schools jeopardizes student success” (p. 1082).

In a meta-analysis, Noltemeyer, Ward and Mcloughlin (2015) concluded there was a significant relationship between students who had been suspended and lower academic achievement. They go on to suggest:

Students who may experience a heightened risk from the outset may be doubly disadvantaged by their schools’ use of disciplinary practices that may further exclude them from instruction that they need to progress educationally and alienate them from the school setting. (p. 234)

Perry and Morris (2016) concluded “suspension lowers school performance and contributes to racial gaps in achievement” (p. 83). Quinn and Hemphill (2014) concluded, “the loss of learning opportunities for suspended students may explain a great deal about the negative associations between suspension and lower educational achievement” (p. 369). Because students are most likely not in an academic environment during a suspension, a student’s academic achievement will be affected during the suspension (Arcia, 2006; Morris & Perry, 2016).

Gender/Race/SES and Suspensions

A primary idea behind public education is that it can serve as the “grand equalizer” that promotes a pathway for equal opportunities, no matter a student’s gender, race or ethnicity, for success beyond high school. “Racial disparities in educational achievement are one of the more important sources of American inequality” (Morris & Perry, 2016, 68) and yet, both qualitative and quantitative research studies have found that not all students are treated fairly when it comes to discipline in schools (Bottiani & Bradshaw, 2016; Michael et al., 2002; Monroe, 2005; Peguero et al., 2019). Morris and Perry (2017) stated, “student discipline is a necessary condition for learning, but research indicates that who is punished and how one is punished differs strikingly by race, class, and gender” (p. 127). Monroe (2005) wrote, “because school trends reflect currents of the national contexts in which they exist, core causes of the discipline gap are both internal and external in schools” (46). For example, teachers may target black students with punishments even when youths of other races engage in the same behavior and black students are two to five times more likely to be suspended than their white counterparts (Bottani & Bradshaw, 2016; Johnston, 2000). Monroe (2005) asserted the conditions that contribute to current disparities are: the criminalization of black males, race and class privilege and zero-tolerance policies, thus supporting the clam of discipline reflecting the national trends.

In addition to race, gender is also a student factor that has garnered a lot of research attention. “In virtually every study presenting school disciplinary data by gender, boys are referred to the office and receive a range of disciplinary consequences at a higher rate than girls (Michael et al., 2002, p. 320). Specifically, research has repeatedly found black boys are punished at a much higher rate and much differently than their

white counterparts (Monroe, 2005; Skiba, 2000). Furthermore, Hannon et al. (2013) found African American girls were also suspended at a higher rate than white girls. Some researchers found black girls are over five times more likely than white girls to be suspended (Annamma, 2014; Skiba, et. al., 1997; Wallace, et. al., 2008).

In addition to research on who is suspended, some research has focused on the inequities of those being suspended and what problems a suspension may cause the student. Discipline policies can promote unfairness by causing students who are already falling behind their peers to fall even further behind. Messacar and Oreopoulos (2013) suggested that “skills and educational attainment are increasingly important in today's economy, and individuals with the least education are faring particularly badly” (p. 55). Low socioeconomic status has long been a risk factor for a student being suspended (Brantlinger, 1991; Wu et al., 1982). Krezmien and Achilles (2006) concluded African American students with a disability were extremely overrepresented in Maryland suspension data. What appears to be happening is that students who are being suspended are the same students who need support for completing their education the most; however, these students often get pushed out of school because they interrupt the educational process with inappropriate behavior (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Boylan & Renzulli, 2017; Brownstein, 2010). Hemphill and Quinn’s 2014 study added to this premise that “racial minorities, students from low-income families, students with lower achievement levels and students who are enrolled in special education have a higher risk of receiving suspensions” (p. 370).

Alternatives to Suspension

Hoye and Collier (2006) suggested alternative education programs are “now packaged as unique solutions that districts can use to improve the quality of education of at-risk student and help reduce the number of student’s dropping out” (p. 657). Additionally, educational institutions have turned to alternative school settings as a means to reengage students who struggle in traditional classroom environments. A wide-ranging list of educational options, such as independent study programs, charter schools, and schools within schools (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002), have all been classified as “alternative settings” for students who are at risk of not completing high school. Because alternative education has evolved over the years and because the term has been applied to such a wide variety of alternative options for students, the true definition of an alternative school is difficult to ascertain for most educators (Lehr et al., 2009). One consistent aspect of alternative schools is that they “appear to be serving students with multiple needs who are not successful in traditional schools” (Lehr et al., 2009).

The alternative setting is continually evolving as schools begin to do their part to alleviate barriers to completing a high school education by participating in partnerships that help meet the various personal needs of students. Sometimes simple needs of students can be met by schools. For example, a partnership between a large, urban Pennsylvania school district and Comcast communications provides discounted internet service for families so students may complete required online work at home (Philadelphia School District,, 2017). Another available resource to promote attendance in some schools is the use of free city bus passes for full-time students (Cobb, 2002).

Reasons for Alternative Discipline Policies

School practices can actually influence students leaving school early (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Willoughby, 2012). Suspension policies, in particular, seem to be a driving force in a student dropping out when these policies mandate a student be sent home for inappropriate behavior (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Lee et al., 2011). Despite the intended consequences of this form of discipline—teaching students to behave appropriately—unintended consequences can also occur. For example, when a student is sent home, students lose access to valuable instructional time. Furthermore, when students are not in school, they often experience a lowered sense of self-esteem, increased feelings of not being wanted, and an alienation from their peers (Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; DeRidder, 1991; Menzer & Hampel, 2009). All of these factors may ultimately lead to student reluctance to return to school once the disciplinary time period is over (Oakland Public Schools, 1992).

Types of Alternatives

Many alternatives to suspension exist within schools. Some of the most common non-suspension discipline strategies are presented below.

School Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS)

Rather than suspending students for minor infractions, some schools are using School Wide Positive Behavior Supports. The Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) system, as it is sometimes known as, is implemented to teach behavioral expectations similarly to the way students learn a curricular subject. The system is implemented by trained staff and focuses on a few behavioral expectations. Each of the three to five agreed upon expectation will contain a behavior the student can remember easily. Additionally, the agreed upon expectation will be shared with each of the

student's teachers for consistency and reflected upon frequently. The intent of a positive behavior support system is to reinforce good behavior and have previously agreed-upon consequences when the behavior is not being displayed (PBIS, 2018).

Various studies have determined SWPBS is a positive way to deal with students who have minor discipline violations at school. Researchers have stated while it is a complicated system to implement and does come without challenges the immediate change in behavior is worth the struggle in implementation and is a good alternative to suspension (Bohanon et al., 2006).

Alternative to Suspension for Violent Behavior (ASVB)

Alternative to Suspension for Violent Behavior (ASVB) is similar to the SWPBS concept. Breunlin et al. (2002) summarized this concept best in their case study by writing:

The structure and format of the Alternative to Suspension for Violent Behavior (ASVB) is predicated on research findings that have provided substantial evidence that violence is largely learned and consequently can be prevented through teaching alternatives to violence (Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1994; Eron & Slaby, 1994). This theory does not deny that the factors contributing to violence are varied and that no one factor is the sole cause of violence (Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1994; Eron & Slaby, 1994; Garbarino, 1999). For example, although it is true that some acts of violence do result from extreme anger or lack of impulse control, still, 'Inadequate impulse control puts an individual at risk for violence only if violent acts are that person's preferred response choice because of previous learning experiences' (Eron & Slaby, 1994, pp. 3–4).

Using the ASVB concept has shown to improve behavior and reduce violence in some cases (Breunlin et al., 2002); however, more research is needed to solidify this concept as a quality alternative to suspension.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

RJ is an idea taken from the justice system and implemented in schools. “The Restorative Justice Center responds to the needs of children who misbehave. Rather than a retributive, penalizing approach that simply hands out punishment” (Ashworth et al., 2008). RJ is built around the concept of relationships, repairing relationships and remorse playing a part in changing the behavior. Proponents believe it gives a voice to the victim and allows both sides to work together to solve the problem (Gonzalez, 2012). Research has shown conflicting results Restorative Justice Programs (Armour, 2013; Standing et al., 2012). Some studies found the amount of time needed to implement correctly meant educators needed to be paid for their time rather than volunteer, thus increasing the cost of implementation (Ashworth et al., 2008). Armour’s (2013) evaluation of preliminary research findings suggested an impact on decreasing expulsions, misconduct and violent behavior. Additionally, his assessment of the preliminary research findings also showed an increase in school engagement and academic achievement. On the contrary, in a study conducted by Standing et al. (2012), the conclusion was reached that there was little impact on improving a student’s behavior in school. However, Standing et al. noted more research was needed over a longer period of time with more subjects to follow.

School Alternative to Suspension Programs: Academic Focus

Although alternative education has been around for a significant period of time, most research has focused on at-risk youth, behavioral changes in school and dropout

prevention (Lange & Sletten, 2002). There is not a considerable amount of research looking at the academic side of alternative settings. However, in a study by Morgan-D'Atrio et al. (1996), the conclusion supported other limited research that a “very high incidence of academic and social skills deficits among adolescents displaying serious behavior problems existed” (p. 190). A need is present to research alternatives with an academic focus. While researching the academic foci, Aron (2006) found it important to differentiate among alternative programs in order to find reliable and consistent results in the research regarding academics. Both asserted it is important to look at long-term, voluntary placement programs versus non-voluntary placement programs that students attend a shorter amount of time.

A study by Ruzzi and Kraemer (2006) surveyed 15 alternative school programs and evaluated strengths and weaknesses of the programs. They concluded the following strengths were among the alternative programs studied: low teacher/student ratios, individual academic plans, flexible scheduling, academic counseling and support, relevant curriculum, computer-based programming and performance based assessment. Challenges were found to be: duration of programs and credential attainment, creating pathways among programs, inconsistent data and little focus on long-term data, a need to validate the GED (High school equivalency diploma), and lack of effective and efficient curriculum, training and diagnostic tools to build literacy and numeracy skills of older students who are far behind. Ruzzi and Kraemer (2006) concluded,

Despite the lack of research and in-depth studies on academic programming in alternative education, this paper and others have identified programs that have been successful with the hardest-to-reach students. The programs' success is

evidenced by their students' ability to academically achieve, or to get on a pathway to achieve, the academic credentials they need to transition to post-secondary education or employment. Expanding and strengthening programs like these is an area that would benefit from further research and analysis. Serving students in these programs well is a critical issue for the social and economic well-being of our nation. (p. 35)

Herzberg's Theory and Alternative to Suspension

Because student learning and behavior are both multifaceted issues, there is a need to dig deeper into alternatives to suspension programs that could meet objectives of schools: improving student behavior, promoting academic growth, and considering the motivation for a student to learn and/or change a negative behavior. Some researchers are beginning to look at motivation and student engagement and/or success in school. Supportive and caring classrooms are important for enhancing a student's motivation to learn (Yu & Singh, 2018). Skinner and Belmont (1993) concluded students who are behaviorally disengaged are lacking motivation because of the way a teacher responds to the behavior and furthermore, interpersonal involvement between a teacher and a student is a major factor in student motivation and student engagement within a school setting.

Herzberg is regarded as one of the leading researchers in motivation theory. He spent much of his career as a Business Professor, but his most recognized work may be his book "The Motivation to Work," which he wrote with Block, Snyderman, and Mausner in 1959. This book was the first to establish theories connecting motivation and the workplace. Herzberg and his colleagues researched factors in the work environment that caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction among 200 Pittsburgh engineers and accountants

(Dinibutun, 2012). In *Organizational Behavior in Education: Leadership and School Reform* (2015), Owens and Valesky stated,

an important concept in the two-factor theory is that people tend to see job satisfaction as being related to intrinsic factors such as success, the challenge of work, achievement and recognition whereas they tend to see dissatisfaction as being related to extrinsic factors. (p. 149)

Most schools want every student to graduate college and/or be career ready, yet some students are pushed out because of poor behavior. Additionally, all stakeholders in the community understand the detriment even one high school dropout can have on the community. “On average, a dropout earns less money, is more likely to be in jail, is less healthy, is less likely to be married, and is unhappier than a high-school graduate” (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013, p. 55). Understanding the consequences for a student not finishing high school could be motivation for a student to stay in school.

According to Owens and Valesky (2015), Herzberg’s Two-factor Theory of Motivation

Posits that motivation is not a single dimension that can be described as a hierarchy of needs but rather is composed of two separate independent factors: motivational factors, which can lead to job satisfaction and maintenance factors, which must be present in sufficient amounts in order for motivational factors to come into play. (p. 147)

Seeing the student as the employee, the at-risk student has not had success nor been recognized for anything positive and quite often sees school (the employer) as “the issue.” Motivation to continue learning is often low when little positive occurs. However,

motivation may be able to be sustained for an individual student, if the student is taken out of the normal setting, barriers to their success removed, and the student is allowed to experience and be recognized for their work. Herzberg suggested seven important factors for enriching jobs: providing employees with direct performance feedback, establishing client relationships, creating continuous opportunities to learn, giving employees control over their own schedules, giving employees control over organizational resources, granting employees permission to communicate directly with people in the organization, and providing employees with personal accountability for their own performance (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Schools could begin to use Herzberg's seven suggestions when setting up discipline approaches to enrich the school experience, even when a student is in trouble; however, this particular theoretical framework has been used very little in the educational setting and is not a current standard that is followed in discipline policies. Some researchers have used Herzberg's model to complete research with regards to schools; however, the studies were focused on teachers and administrators and their satisfaction at work (school) and not students (Egan, 2001; McVay, 2007; Shirol, 2014).

Herzberg's framework provides an appropriate lens to understand findings of this study. Students who are at-risk have usually not had success in the past. Many students have had discipline referrals, and therefore, they do not want to attend school. Additionally, with the loss of class time, a student has not had success in the classroom. Suspended students are complex and for many, their poor behavior is a reaction to other issues they may be dealing with, yet we treat their outburst in isolation instead of looking deeper and asking "why" a student has acted in a particular manner. Brownstein (2010) stated, "Children with mental and emotional disabilities are much more likely to be

suspended” (p. 26). Motivation may not stay at a high level and may be lowered even more when a student is having difficulties mentally and emotionally in addition to the suspension. For many students, suspension is the final consequence before a student drops out of school. McEvoy and Welker (2000) wrote numerous studies have shown a direct positive link between student behavioral problems and academic failure.

Chapter Two Summary

Chapter Two presented an in-depth review of the literature to establish the need for the present study. First, the literature review examined the dropout epidemic in the United States and how school discipline, past and present, affects a student who leaves school early. Next, literature focusing on suspensions was reviewed while considering specifically the effects of suspension on student behavior and academic success once the consequence has been recognized. Finally, research with regards to suspensions and the effect on a student’s motivation to improve behavior and academics was examined to establish a need for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Student misbehavior can be interpreted through a variety of lenses and contexts. Stearns and Glennie (2006) explained that most often, a student's lack of learning and/or poor behavior is a symptom of a larger issue and if the context of the student's poor choice is not understood, assigned consequences may not reach intended goals. Research supports the understanding that context must be considered when assigning consequences for student misbehavior. Lagana et al. (2011) stated, "Many schools feel they have to enforce school rules in a rigid and inflexible manner to ensure that all students are treated fairly and comparably. However, not all students have the same life circumstances or obstacles" (p. 109). These life circumstances and obstacles may directly influence student behavior, and if schools do not understand how contextual situations influence underlying motivation for student behavior, schools may not reach intended outcomes through discipline policy enforcement.

Because student learning and behavior are both multifaceted issues, there is a need to gain a better understanding of alternative-to-suspension programs that could meet both objectives of schools: keeping all students safe/supporting a healthy learning environment and changing a student's behavior through appropriate consequences for

misbehavior. In order to improve student behavior and promote academic growth, schools must consider the motivation for a student to learn and/or change a negative behavior. Therefore, this study will utilize a qualitative case study design to gain a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrator perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program, Graduation Reboot, on student motivation to learn and progress toward a high school diploma.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on a student's motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. More specifically, this case study explores student, teacher and administrator perceptions regarding a program implemented in a Midwestern state, an alternative-to-suspension program named Graduation Reboot (not an acronym) on student motivation for success. Students with existing behaviors such as truancy, previous suspension, multiple failing grades, or grade retention qualify for the Graduation Reboot program. Once the characteristics of a Graduation Reboot student have presented in some manner at school, recommendations are made by administrators to the Director of Secondary Education to allow placement in the program. Students are then required to attend Graduation Reboot rather than continuing to attend their traditional high school. Because Graduation Reboot is a required program for some students, the program may sometimes need to help students find motivation. Graduation Reboot has a small teacher/student ratio, classes off site of the regular school campus, counseling services and adults who are committed to

helping at-risk youth. Graduation Reboot includes integrated academic and behavior support prior to student suspensions for truancy.

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is:

How does an alternative-to-suspension program, Graduation Reboot, in a large Midwest urban high school, influence motivation for at-risk students to reach academic and behavior goals?

Sub-questions include:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach academic goals?
2. How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach behavior goals?
3. What are teachers and administrators perceptions about factors of the Graduation Reboot program that motivate students?
4. How do former students, who were at-risk of graduation but completed high school, perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on their motivation to reach academic and behavioral goals?
5. What other realities are present?

For the purpose of triangulation, data were gathered from multiple sources including students over the age of 18 who have graduated or are on track for graduation and who are or have been involved in the Graduation Reboot program, past and present Graduation Reboot teachers, administrators' observation of classrooms, suspension program documents (policies and procedures), electronic communication and

examination of de-identified suspension data and attendance records. The theoretical framework of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation was used to interpret and explain the findings from this study.

Research Design

The design of this study is qualitative rather than quantitative in order to gain an understanding of the multiple aspects of the influence of the Graduation Reboot program on student motivation for at-risk students to reach academic and behavior goals. Academic growth, for this study, is not defined as specific student performance as indicated on standardized tests or grade point average. Instead, academic growth is defined as the student's ability to remain in school and to continue progress toward degree completion.

Merriam (1998) wrote "research is, after all, producing knowledge about the world, in our case, the world of educational practice" (p.3). For this specific study, knowledge was produced by understanding the perceptions of students, teachers and administrators. "The key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individual interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Therefore, constructivism is the epistemological perspective guiding this study as participants share their perspectives about the influence of alternatives to suspension on student academic growth.

Merriam (1998) describes a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit" (p. 89). For this research, case study is an appropriate

design due to the boundedness of this particular program and the point in time of this study.

Methodological Procedures

The Graduation Reboot program is an intervention program in a Midwestern state where the school district boasts a 91% graduation rate and has a mission of graduating 100% of its students college and/or career ready. The school district houses 20 school sites: 14 elementary schools, one early childhood center, one Sixth/Seventh grade center, an Eighth grade center, a Freshman Academy an Alternative school and a high school. Currently, the district is made up of 49% Caucasian students, 14% African American, 7% Asian, 24% Hispanic and 6% Native American. Additionally, 59.3% of the district's students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, 10% of the students are special education students, and 92 different languages are spoken across the district. The goal of 100% graduation keeps the district moving forward creatively with “out of the box thinking” so every student may find academic success (District Website, 2018).

The Graduation Reboot program was first implemented in the fall of 2014, and for the past five semesters, the program has served at-risk students. The original intent of the program, as developed by the school district, was to educate students who were on long term suspensions and include intensive, targeted counseling as well as additional academic interventions to boost their learning. Since its inception, Graduation Reboot has taken on many versions and, while the intensive counseling and additional academic interventions occur, the intent of Graduation Reboot is now intervention rather than reaction to suspensions. Graduation Reboot serves those on the verge of being suspended as well as those that have been suspended. The primary focus of the program remains: at-

risk students in need of a change in behavior and who also need emotional and academic support to regain a motivation to learn.

Participant Selection

Participants for this study include three teachers, two administrators, and five students, for a total of ten participants. Purposeful sampling was used to select administrators, teachers, and students because in order to “discover, understand, and gain insight we must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Students were selected from a group of students over the age of 18 and who had successfully completed graduation requirements or were on track for graduation after participating in Graduation Reboot. Administrators who were interviewed for this study included those administrators who worked in the district and who had recommended students to the Graduation Reboot program. Teachers were selected by choosing a random sample of those who had taught in the Graduation Reboot program. A total of ten interviews were completed; five students, three teachers, and two administrators participated.

Data Collection

“Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment” (Merriam, 1998, 69). For this particular study, much effort was given to discover as much information from the Graduation Reboot environment by collecting data from interviews with students, teachers and administrators as well as data from observations and document analysis. All data collected allowed the researcher to become an effective user of the data, as Merriam suggested.

Observations

Data collected includes field notes from observations of the Graduation Reboot classroom. Merriam (1998) noted that observations help the researcher to notice things that have become routine to participants themselves and to also help triangulate emerging findings from other data collection sources. Observational data includes students' work habits while in the room, arrival and departure times, attitudes and behavior. Observational data were recorded through detailed field notes.

Surveys

Open-ended survey questions were sent to two high school administrators and three teachers who had taught in the Graduation Reboot program. A survey containing open-ended interview questions was sent to teachers and administrators utilizing Qualtrics software. The reason for sending the interviews through Qualtrics was based upon my position in the district, which is further explained in the Researcher Role section of this chapter. Interviews were conducted with five students who had experienced the Graduation Reboot program and who were also over the age of 18 years of age.

Interviews

Interviews following a semi-structured interview protocol were conducted with five students. I conducted interviews by following semi-structured interview protocols, audio taping each interview and transcribing quickly after the interview. I transcribed all interviews myself. The interview questions are provided in Appendix A. Survey questions were returned through Qualtrics anonymously so that individual responses could not be linked to survey participants.

Documents

Data were collected by inspecting approval criteria for a student to attend Graduation Reboot. Additional data included examining communications sent to Graduation Reboot students, policies regarding Graduation Reboot and de-identified attendance data. Additional data collected included electronic communication and examination of de-identified suspension data. Data were analyzed to identify trends. Examples include: ratio of male to female, ethnic breakdown of students served, reasons for previous suspensions, number of absences and grade point averages.

Data Analysis

Merriam's (1998) data analysis practices were followed for this study. Each stage of data analysis is explained below.

Initial Stages of Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) suggested data analysis is the “process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). While organizing and preparing the data, I made meaning of the data by considering the information from the interviews and how it connected or did not relate to the data found in de-identified data in reports as well as information gleaned from observations and open-ended survey questions. Organization of data included originally keeping all pieces collected in traditional file folders labeled interview, reports and observations. Later data was moved to computer folders for ease of writing, organizing and re-organizing.

Coding of Data

As Merriam (1998) suggested, analysis will coincide with data collection, utilizing a constant comparative method of analysis. I used Saldana's (2012) attribute or descriptive coding. After coding data, I organized codes into categories, through the use of NVIVO software, to identify themes that began to emerge. Saldana indicated this was an appropriate place to start in studies where multiple participants are included (p. 55).

Generate Themes or Categories

The main categories from the NVIVO coding were grouped into larger categories using axial coding to provide a way to see how the information related within larger themes. While coding, I looked for themes that align with Herzberg's (1959) work.

Convey Findings and Interpret Meanings

Findings were explained through the lens of Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation. More specifically, I examined findings to determine which of Herzberg's labeled hygiene factors emerge. This allowed for the consideration of particular concepts that were important and necessary for a student's success or were a source of motivation or demotivation for the student.

Researcher Role

Researcher Bias

As a qualitative researcher, and as the data collection instrument, it is important to position myself in regard to this study. During the course of conducting this study, I was employed by the district that hosts the Graduation Reboot program and I was closely associated to the program with supervisory responsibility over the program. My involvement in the program could certainly have influenced participant responses and/or willingness to participate. To minimize this limitation, I sent surveys containing open-

ended questions to teachers and administrators utilizing Qualtrics software. All responses were returned anonymously to me through Qualtrics. To further protect anonymity, I sent all teachers who had taught in Graduation Reboot an invitation to the survey and all administrators who had a student in the program. Those that chose to participate returned responses directly through Qualtrics. I also designed the survey so that responses were received anonymously. Using Qualtrics provided an anonymous process for teachers and administrators who directly worked with the Graduation Reboot program to answer interview questions. Because some students who have graduated were no longer involved with the program, I conducted those interviews in person. Meeting with students in person allowed me to observe their reactions to questions to provide a better understanding of their responses. I was also able to ask clarifying questions, if needed.

While reviewing and analyzing the data, I was careful not to let my impression of the program influence how the data were interpreted. Instead, I listened to the voices of participants, and I collected observational and document data without any preconceived ideas of what the data would reveal. I tried to be fair and open when analyzing the comments of students, teachers and administrators who were interviewed. I also followed university and federal policy as well as qualitative research protocols.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, ethical considerations were employed regarding data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Trustworthiness of findings is an important consideration for qualitative researchers. Table 1 outlines trustworthiness techniques used in this study.

Table 1

Trustworthiness Criteria and Examples

Credibility		
Criteria/Technique	Result	Examples
Prolonged engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Built trust ○ Developed rapport ○ Built relationships ○ Obtained wide scope of data ○ Obtained accurate data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ De-identified data when possible ○ Used anonymous ways to collect data from
Persistent observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obtained in-depth data ○ Obtained accurate data ○ Sorted relevancies from irrelevancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Observation of students and teacher within a classroom ○ Interviews of students over the age of 18 ○ Study artifacts from the Graduation Reboot program
Triangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verified data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, schedule, previous year statistics
Peer debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussed and received feedback on interview questions ○ Discussed and helped other doctoral students in the process of writing this final project
Member checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verified documentation and conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers from Graduation Reboot looked at semester data to verify statistics ○ Teachers received copies of the findings to verify accuracy, especially about the conclusions drawn from the study, and provided any important missing information, and/or scheduled a follow-up meeting

Purposive sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generated data for emergent design and emerging hypotheses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did not create barriers for students when collecting data so the data is real
Transferability		
Criteria/Technique	Result	Examples
Referential adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provided a comprehensive picture of the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gathered information from classroom observations, program observations, interviews with students and teachers and program artifacts
Thick description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provided a data base for transferability judgment ○ Provided a vicarious experience for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The history of Alternative education as well as the short history of Graduation Reboot; artifacts from program
Dependability/Conformability		
Criteria/Technique	Result	Examples
Access to an audit trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allowed auditor to determine trustworthiness of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interview guides, notes, documents, note cards, peer debriefing notes, email exchanges between participants and myself, etc. were readily available

Limitations of Study

One of the most significant limitations of this study is my association with Graduation Reboot and prior experience with at-risk students. While growing up, my mother taught school, and she taught at-risk students. In learning from my mother, I always perceived that I had learned from the “best” about these students, especially how to deal with their behaviors. From observing her work with at-risk students, I formed my own perception of what works and what does not work with at-risk students in the classroom. During my teaching career, I taught a number of at-risk students within my classes. I was known as the “go to person” with this type of student and have kept this

reputation since moving into administration. These experiences may have affected the study because I have seen success with struggling students and truly believe that with concentrated help, support, and positive interventions, all students can and will have success. Even more than ever, after 26 years of working in the field of education, I am convinced and strongly believe that a 100% graduation rate is possible.

However, as a researcher, I was very careful not to let my personal beliefs and experiences influence how the data was interpreted. I was fair and open when analyzing the comments of students who were interviewed. I followed university and federal policy as well as qualitative research protocols.

An additional limitation may have been my presence during the interviewing of each student participant. Students may have perceived me to be an authority figure, and they may not have been candid with their responses. To minimize this limitation, I reminded them that their responses were confidential and that I would like for them to be as honest and open as they comfortably feel. Another step that was taken to minimize bias in this study was that I gathered data from teachers anonymously through Qualtrics. I invited all teachers who were associated with Graduation Reboot to participate in the study, and the teachers who chose to participate responded anonymously through Qualtrics. I did not know the identity of those who chose to participate and those who did not.

Finally, I took careful field notes during observations to document exactly what I saw rather than what I expected to see. I was careful to conduct observations as an outside observer so that I did not create bias in my findings. Additionally, all observations were done in a non-participatory format. I did not participate in any classroom activities during the gathering of data.

Conclusion

An in-depth review of the methodology has been addressed in Chapter three. Researcher bias and limitations of the study were also addressed due to my long history and background working with at-risk youth. Trustworthiness has been defined, and I have provided information concerning how to ensure that findings are valid and credible.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF DATA

Chapter Four presents a description of the data collected throughout this study. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. More specifically, this case study examined student experiences in a program being implemented in a Midwestern State, an alternative to suspension named Graduation Reboot (not an acronym). The following description provides context for the district in which the Graduation Reboot program is housed. Moreover, the intent of the Graduation Reboot program is explained through information presented regarding the type of student it is intended to serve. It is noteworthy to establish who the typical Graduation Reboot student is and what experiences in school he/she has faced before attending the Graduation Reboot program. Characteristics of a Graduation Reboot student are explained to give a clear picture of the program and who it serves. Finally, specific characteristics of participants in this study are explained.

District Characteristics

The Graduation Reboot program is an intervention program in a Midwestern State where the school district boasts a 91% graduation rate and has a mission of graduating

100% of its students college and/or career ready. The school district houses 20 school sites: 1 early childhood center, 14 elementary schools, a 6th/7th grade center, an 8th grade center, a Freshman Academy, an alternative school, and a high school.

Currently, the district serves 15,487 students with an ethnically diverse population (District Website, 2020). The student body is made up of 7.1% Asian, 33.3% Hispanic, 14.3% African American, 4.8% Native American, 0.2% Pacific Islander, 9.3% multi-racial and 31% Caucasian (District Website, 2020). Additionally, the district provides English Learner services to 2,643 elementary and 7,875 secondary students in 2016-17 and serves 3,218 gifted students from grades 1-12 (District Website, 2020). The district includes 73% of the students who are on free and/or reduced lunch while boasting an average graduation rate between 2014-2017 of 90%. The goal of 100% Graduation College and Career Ready keeps the district moving forward creatively and innovatively so every student may find academic success.

Graduation Reboot

It is imperative to provide a rich description of the Graduation Reboot program in order for findings to be understood relative to their context. This section explains the intent and history of the program as well as common characteristics of students served by the program.

The Intent and History of Graduation Reboot

The Graduation Reboot program began as an after-school suspension program during the school year 2013-2014 (personal interview, 2020). The original goal of the program was to recapture long-term suspended students who had attendance issues, minor drug/alcohol offenses and other nonviolent discipline infractions while at school. Most

often, the targeted student had not completed work at home while on suspension and was in jeopardy of being a high school dropout. The intent was to provide encouragement for students who may not have completed assigned schoolwork while at home and to increase the individual student's motivation to complete the assigned work. The understanding of those involved in the implementation of Graduation Reboot was that motivation would be increased for each student by getting needed academic help from in-person teachers versus working on a computer program at home with no in-person help (personal interview, 2020). Mental health counseling was also available to all students with the intention of helping students understand their behavior and provide behavioral and mental health support. The program was held during after school hours from 3:15pm – 6:15pm on the Alternative School campus. Staff serving the program during the first year included one administrator, one teacher per session, and a part-time mental health counselor who served the program. Curriculum was provided online for students; however, teachers supplemented assignments and provided academic help when needed.

During the 2015-16 school year, Graduation Reboot continued to serve suspended students; however, the type of student broadened to include more than the original list of violations. The program's schedule switched to a full-day blended schedule with students attending teacher-taught classes as well as a time for credit recovery, which utilized a computer-based curriculum and mental health support groups to achieve its goals. Staff serving the program during the second year included one administrator, four teachers, and a full-time mental health counselor. The program served 35 students during the 2015-2016 school year, of which 14 were female and 21 were male. Students attended a full day of school; however, the schedule was set up in a block schedule instead of a

traditional six-hour day. Each academic block was two hours. Blocks one and three were traditional classes with teacher-led instruction while block two was credit recovery and an opportunity for all students to participate in some form of counseling. During counseling, both individual and group therapy were offered. On average, students attended 81.4% of the time and earned a cumulative grade point average of 2.07, on a 4.0 scale (personal interview, 2020). The full-day version of Graduation Reboot was in place for a semester and in December of 2014, the program temporarily ended to re-evaluate who was being served and how individual students were being served. During therapy sessions first semester, students revealed to counselors that trauma from life experiences had previously been undiscussed and perhaps untreated. Additionally, some students were also determined to have learning disabilities that the staff was not prepared to address. An evaluation was needed to be able to serve the students in the best way possible (personal interview, 2020).

The re-evaluation period lasted through second semester 2014-15 and brought more changes for Graduation Reboot during the 2015-16 school year. Beginning in August 2015, the program began the format that is current as of today. The current model includes one administrator, two teachers, and one full-time mental health counselor who serve the program. Additional community partners are included to help address student issues such as homelessness, lack of food, job training, and college/technical school application. The Graduation Reboot program is now housed with the district's adult education program and is scheduled from 8:15 – 2:45 pm daily. Students have flexibility in their scheduling, so a blended model with a flexible attendance schedule is used. When a student enters Graduation Reboot, he or she is granted full access to high school

activities such as prom and graduation. Students may now ride busses for transportation to and from school and take advantage of college/career academic counseling through the high school. Each individual student's suspension is terminated, and the student becomes an active student who is in good standing. Currently, a student's suspension is no longer the sole characteristic of their recommendation for attendance in Graduation Reboot. Additional details of specific characteristics of Graduation Reboot students are included in the next section.

Graduation Reboot Students

Students in Graduation Reboot have had numerous interruptions to their education. Behavioral suspensions are typically the reason for an academic interruption; however, students invariably create their own interruptions by being absent because of family needs such as taking care of a family member or working to help pay family bills. No matter the reason for the absence, a Graduation Reboot student has the potential to be a better-than-average student academically, but the interruptions to their education have caused them to have a low grade point average. A consistent daily pattern of attendance is uncommon with this group. Most often, a Graduation Reboot student has had some early academic success, but a life event or multiple life events caused poor attendance and lack of focus on education during their high school years. Parents and family members are sometimes poor examples for students to follow because they have commonly not completed their high school degree and have set an example that school is not important. Some Graduation Reboot students have been the first person to graduate from high school in their family. Many students, when they entered the program, do not have enough credits to be classified as a senior and are in jeopardy of becoming a high school dropout.

Graduation Reboot students often are broken emotionally, and many of these students lack hope (personal interview, 2020).

Study Participants

Participants in this study were selected using purposeful sampling. Included in the selection process were three teachers, two administrators and five students who were over the age of 18 and had successfully completed graduation requirements or were on track for graduation after participating in Graduation Reboot. Administrators who were interviewed for this study included those who work in the district and who have recommended students to the Graduation Reboot program. Teachers were selected by choosing a random sample of those who have taught in the Graduation Reboot program. Each teacher who met the selection criteria was assigned a number; number cards were folded and placed in a bowl where three numbers were randomly selected. Numbers and names were matched up to identify which teachers had been selected for the interviews for this study. A total of ten interviews were completed; participants include five students, three teachers and two administrators. All participants have been assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Teachers

Three teachers were interviewed for this study. A biographical summary of each participant is offered below.

Kaylee

The teachers selected for this study represented an array of experience. One teacher, Kaylee, is a 28-year-old white female with four years of educational experience. She was a second year teacher when beginning her assignment in the Graduation Reboot

program. The first year of teaching for Kaylee included a school overseas and consisted of a non-traditional educational setting for students as she taught English to non-English speaking students. She was extremely inexperienced in implementing school discipline; however, her understanding of at-risk students and how best to motivate individual students to learn was a significant component of her skills that helped her to make connections with the students in Graduation Reboot. Building relationships with students was a strength that Kaylee exhibited while teaching in the Graduation Reboot program.

Abby

Abby was an experienced teacher who began her career as a lawyer and transitioned into education later in life. She is a 59-year-old, white female with 18 years of teaching experience. She had teaching experience with at-risk students at the alternative school and a knack for teaching students creatively and allowing them the flexibility and time to learn at their pace. She was a vocalist and could be heard on weeknights or weekends singing in various places throughout the community. This outside activity gave her an outlet to connect with students.

Anita

The third teacher interviewed, Anita, was the most experienced teacher of the three. She is a 56-year-old, Native American/Irish female with 30 years of educational experience. Anita taught in regular education and had additional responsibilities as a student government sponsor and tennis coach while teaching in the regular education programs. When the alternative school was created in 1995, Anita was one of the original alternative school teachers who helped develop policies and procedures for the alternative school. Her wealth of experience with the at-risk population made her an invaluable

Graduation Reboot teacher and one with whom students felt comfortable building relationships.

Administrators

Two administrators participated in interviews. Their unique biographical characteristics are explained below.

Andy

Andy is completing his 6th year as class principal. He is a 44-year-old, white male with 22 years of educational experience. He is a high school graduate of the same district where Graduation Reboot is housed. He received his bachelor's degree and master's degree in education and is certified in physical education, earth/physical science and biology. He taught in the district immediately out of college before leaving to teach in other schools and ultimately returned to teach, coach and eventually become an administrator. Andy is a "product" of this district and knows the expectations for students within the district. He has a "passion for the underdog" and high expectations for achievement with whomever he works (personal interview, 2020). His time coaching athletic teams demonstrates that he can motivate students.

Matt

The second administrator interviewed is Matt. He is considered extremely experienced in the district with his 29 years of experience (personal interview, 2020). He has taught, coached and been in numerous teacher leader positions. He is African American and is 52 years old. Matt serves as a role-model for the diverse population in the district. Students build relationships with Matt quickly, and each relationship is long-

lasting (personal interview, 2020). Students enjoy his conversations and often look to him for advice on various topics of life.

Students

In addition to teachers and administrators, five students were also interviewed. Each participant was a current or former student in the Graduation Reboot program.

Lynn

Lynn is a 23-year-old Hispanic female. She moved into the district as a sophomore and immediately began to fall behind academically because she was often pulled out of school to interpret English for her parents as they navigated life not understanding or speaking the English language. She moved out of her parent's home and lived on her own beginning her junior year after a dispute with her parent. She found herself working long hours to afford her apartment and eventually quit attending school. Lynn indicated she had become depressed and was close to giving up. She felt alone and unmotivated to stay in school until she began attending Graduation Reboot (personal interview, 2020). Lynn earned her diploma after approximately eighteen months in Graduation Reboot.

Kaye

Kaye, a 22-year-old African American female had constant family problems. Her father was absent from the home. She was often tasked with babysitting her siblings while her mother worked. She ran the home as mom worked long hours and was absent much of the time. She was suspended for attendance violations on multiple occasions (personal interview, 2020); however after time in Graduation Reboot, Kaye has earned her high school diploma.

Elliott

Elliott was the only student participant who came from a home where both parents were present. Elliott was a 23-year-old Hispanic female. She was extremely shy in school, yet very outgoing outside of school (personal interview, 2020). He felt teachers did not pay attention to her during class; therefore, she made the choice to repeatedly skip school. She eventually was dropped from school for non-attendance and upon re-enrolling was recommended to the Graduation Reboot program (personal interview, 2020).

Rich

Rich moved into the district from Pakistan in 2011. He is a 21-year-old male that is continuing to work towards his high school diploma. The move from Pakistan came soon after Rich's mother passed away. Along with the trauma of losing his mother, Rich was not fluent in English when he began school in the district. The large environment at the high school was difficult for Rich to navigate while learning the culture and the language. He felt alone and had very few friends until he began to learn the American culture. Once he established friendships, he fell behind academically because he quickly began to skip school (personal interview, 2020).

Richan

Richan is a 21-year-old African American female with various life experiences that did not allow her to attend school consistently. She is a teen parent. She was suspended for "pushing boundaries with dress code" (personal interview, 2020). Her mother, while present, worked long hours to provide for Richan's family; therefore, Richan was often tardy or absent as she took care of her siblings and household chores

while her mom worked. She suffers from depression and has been hospitalized for suicidal thoughts and plans (personal interview, 2020) but has earned her high school while attending Graduation Reboot.

Graduation Reboot Atmosphere

Graduation Reboot is held in a location not on the high school campus. The entrance for Graduation Reboot students is a different door from where traditional students who are housed at the site arrive. Graduation Reboot students convene in a classroom that contains computer tables pushed together in a pod with six desktop computers for each pod. There are no individual student desks. Multiple tables have been placed together in the middle of the room so students may use them if they want to work on a laptop rather than a desk computer. The “family” table, as it is often called, is used for playing games during break time or eating so everyone may sit at the table and talk to one another. The other space on the floor is an open area so students may take advantage of a non-traditional school atmosphere to work while sitting on a bean bag or just sitting on the floor to work.

Students like the openness of the classroom and choice for their space to learn (personal interview, 2020). One teacher desk is in the middle back portion of the room (classroom observation, 2020). While two teachers are in charge of Graduation Reboot, the teachers have a rotating schedule, so both are rarely present on the same day. They have flexibility to teach on the same day, if needed.

The curriculum for Graduation Reboot is an online curriculum. In a traditional setting, it is often difficult for students to balance six classes while also dealing with the stress of their home lives. The online curriculum allows for students to have an adaptable

learning platform that compliments their lifestyle rather than adding another stressor as is sometimes the case in a more traditional setting. Many students work at night in order to get ahead in their classes or make up classes they have failed in a suitable fashion. This ability to recover credits and also earn new credits sooner than their peers in a regular educational setting motivates some to expedite their work so they may graduate early (personal interview, 2020). Students work individually on various subjects during the day and most often wear headphones to lessen distractions. Some students prefer to take three or more classes at a time to break up their day while others prefer to only work on one or two classes at a time (personal interview, 2020). The flexibility in assigning classes allows for students to work at a pace they are comfortable with while helping them to build confidence as they work to handle a less strenuous academic load. Additionally, the flexible schedule complements the counseling opportunities provided in the program so students can focus on themselves while also moving forward academically (personal interview, 2020).

Conclusion

Chapter Four described the Graduation Reboot program, a typical student in the Graduation Reboot program as well as an in-depth look at the district Graduation Reboot is housed in. More specifically, and because Graduation Reboot is not a widely known concept, a description of the intent of the program and the type of student the program is intended to serve was presented. Then, a description of common traits among Graduation Reboot students was offered. Finally, a biographical summary of each of this study's ten participants was provided. Chapter Five will present the findings of this study.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter Four presented data collected throughout this case study while Chapter Five presents an explanation of data analysis. Additionally, findings collected through interviews with students, teachers, and administrators and also data from observations and document analysis. Merriam (1998) defined data analysis as “the process of making sense of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the research as seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (p. 178).

Using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998), the data were organized and analyzed by using attribute or descriptive coding. As the data collection instrument, my goal was to listen to the voices of participants to understand their intended meanings in answering interview questions. Observation field notes and collected documents were also coded. Codes from the data were then grouped into categories. After all data were collected and categories were identified, categories were analyzed to identify themes that emerged. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation was then used as the lens to organize and explain how themes aligned with the framework.

Themes

Presented next is an explanation of the themes that emerged. The four themes provide an understanding of teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of

Graduation Reboot on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. The themes that emerged are caring, consistency, communication, and celebrations.

Caring

Every student interviewed mentioned they felt cared about in the Graduation Reboot program. Something as simple as knowing a student's name was frequently mentioned during interviews. It was also important to students that adults knew how to pronounce their names correctly. One student, Kaye summarized her perception by saying, "Just being noticed every day, being greeted every day and actually knowing my name and how to pronounce it was important to me." Another student, Elliott stated, "I felt like [I was] loved there. I felt like I had a chance. There were people there that wanted me to move forward and succeed and finish school."

Richan, a third student, said "It (Graduation Reboot) motivated me because I see that the teachers were more caring." Students felt the approach of the adults in Graduation Reboot helped create a caring atmosphere. During the interview, Kaye said "Graduation Reboot [teachers] take time to get to know you and get to know what is going on outside of school. They work with you. You are understood." She also mentioned that a key difference between the traditional high school and Graduation Reboot was how she was treated if she came to school crying. She felt, at the high school, there was a feeling of "suck it up" and "go to class," whereas in Graduation Reboot she

felt comfortable enough to automatically go to an administrator or counseling office. She knew she would be asked “What’s wrong?” or “How can I help you?” or “What’s going on Sister?” She finished her remarks by saying that just hearing someone say, “You are going to get through it. You are going to graduate, and you are going to walk” is what she needed to hear to make it to the end of the day. One administrator, Andy, mentioned, “You have to have somebody in there that is empathetic to the students and understands everything that goes on but also holds them accountable. It can’t be all sympathy.” The adults’ ability to be firm and consistent, while also showing empathy, helped to create the caring atmosphere. Some students mentioned that participation in Graduation Reboot was the first time that they had someone celebrate their birthdays. Others discussed the Thanksgiving family meal that was cooked and served by staff as an example of why they felt cared about by those involved with the Graduation Reboot program.

Counseling was also mentioned as a reason why students felt cared about in Graduation Reboot. During a classroom visit, evidence showed the counselor on staff was clearly invested in the program. During the observation, a student was having a bad day. The student was not on the counselor’s active caseload; nevertheless, she took the time to pull the student out, check on him and assure him that support and resources were available, if needed. The student was then able to take a few minutes, refocus, and finish the day working strong.

The teachers indicated during the observation that it was protocol for the counselor to do a daily check-in with each student, whether on her case load or not, to “keep a pulse on their mental health.” The teachers and counselor would often conference when time allowed in order to update each other on how individual students were doing

academically as well as in their personal lives. All students, teachers and administrators mentioned relationships were a key component of Graduation Reboot and helped to motivate students to get to school because they felt a sense of belonging and care. The emotional check-ins appeared to be one of the reasons why students felt they “belonged” in Graduation Reboot. Students knew that Graduation Reboot staff were aware of life in and out of school, and this knowledge helped staff and students build and maintain strong, positive relationships. The check-ins and conversations showed students the adults cared, and the time adults invested in them increased student motivation to achieve their academic goals (student interview, 2020).

Consistency

For students, discipline was rarely a concern after they enrolled in Graduation Reboot. During the previous two years of Graduation Reboot, ten of the 153 total Graduation Reboot students were suspended. Administrators explained why discipline incidents were so low by stating, “When students know what to expect and [they understand] the consequences of their actions, they will react accordingly.” Students mentioned that they appreciated the consistent expectations and steady implementation of those expectations by all involved in the program. Multiple students stated in their interviews that knowing what to expect and seeing the consequences handed out fairly helped them with their own anxiety. Students knew what to expect from day to day and expectations were clear from the initial interview that took place with each student and administrator; therefore, they felt comfortable and experienced low anxiety. Matt, an administrator, stated,

The structure that the program provides is what the kids are wanting—that level of structure along with the trust and personalization. With those things put together, students can buy in and sense ‘someone has my back,’ and someone is going to hold me accountable. (Administrator interview, 2020)

This consistency in discipline and expectations was also evidenced in observations. For example, during one classroom observation, a student came in late and automatically signed in. The student immediately pulled up a chair to talk with the teacher about making up missed work at home. Due dates and specific assignments were also discussed. In another instance, a student was late coming back from lunch and had not communicated with the teacher. The student walked in and said, “I know. I know. I’m grounded from lunch tomorrow” (classroom observation, 2020).

All students, teachers, and administrators interviewed mentioned consistency with all aspects of the program. “Stability” was another word that was used to describe the Graduation Reboot program. One student mentioned joining the Graduation Reboot program was the first time he had experienced stability. He explained that Graduation Reboot motivated him to graduate because it gave him a sense of accomplishment, and it also made his family proud (student interview, 2020). One teacher recalled a particular student whom she had in class during Graduation Reboot. This student had not been one that attended consistently at the high school; however, after joining Graduation Reboot, she began to attend daily and receive consistent help in dealing with her personal life. As confidence increased for this student, absences decreased, academic success improved, and this student is now a high school graduate. Also, during the teacher interview, a second student was mentioned who had been involved in numerous verbal and physical

fight at the high school. The teacher said when the student joined the program she was determined to get kicked out and be sent home for the remainder of the year. The student was extremely skeptical of Graduation Reboot and, more notably, the staff of the program. As time passed, the teacher saw the student's attitude soften; she became actively engaged in class and experienced academic success. Furthermore, this student became an active participant in counseling and did not have any suspensions for inappropriate behavior while in the program.

Communication

Students and teachers emphasized the importance of communication. The interviews and observations revealed that communication was a reason that students were motivated to come daily and improve academically. From the beginning of a student's enrollment in Graduation Reboot, expectations were communicated to the student and consequences for not meeting expectations were shared. During a classroom observation, I overheard one student saying to another student that they "knew what was coming" for a fellow student who was late for a fourth time. The student making the statement had previously been late many times and had experienced a consequence for his tardiness. Communication of expectations and consequences had been clear, and he did not question the teacher's commitment to follow discipline procedures because he had experienced it himself and seemed to have watched others receive the same consequences. He mentioned that "the teachers tell us all the time to text them if we are going to be late" (classroom observation, 2020). Students felt comfortable when they were able to communicate with teachers, administrators, and counselors in the program. Richan mentioned she knew the adults "could talk to us and understand us." Richan also

stated she made new friends while attending Graduation Reboot and found she spoke to some students that she did not associate with at the high school. “It was good to connect with people that I didn’t connect with at the high school” (student interview, 2020).

During one of the administrator interviews, Matt indicated it was important to also have someone in charge of the program that can participate in what he called “real talk” with the students. He said:

I am somewhat reluctant to talk to students that way, and I think those kids refer to that as “real talk,” and I think real talk has value in letting those kids really know this is how it works and that you have their back. (Administrator interview, 2020)

Communication does not always take place verbally. Many students mentioned that body language was a form of communication used in Graduation Reboot. Whether it was an adult’s proximity in the room or a glance in their direction, students appreciated not having attention called to them for a specific behavior. Students felt the “gentle nudge” was just what they needed to collect their thoughts and then get to work. Both high school administrators commented how important the personality of the Graduation Reboot administrator was for the success of the program. They shared it was important for the Graduation Reboot administrator to be relatable to teenagers and possess the ability to create a relationship that allowed real, truthful conversation without judgment.

Celebrations

During the observations, it was evident that Graduation Reboot celebrates student success. Most students have failed numerous classes prior to attending Graduation Reboot; therefore, the first class they completed and passed in Graduation Reboot was

often one of the first celebrated milestones. While observing a student who had recently joined the program, I overheard a fellow student saying to him, “Dude, hurry up and finish a class so we can all celebrate you.” Another celebration I observed was when a student earned a new identification badge for advancing their grade level. One student in particular, during the observation, received her senior identification badge. Most of the Graduation Reboot students clapped and celebrated the student; at the same time students were heard making comments such as “I can’t wait to get mine” or “Man it is nice to have mine so I don’t have to wear that sophomore badge anymore” (classroom observation, 2020).

Other celebrations mentioned in student interviews were specific holidays and program graduation. In particular, students laughed about, but appreciated, egg coloring. A challenge had been made to the Graduation Reboot students to finish a class within a certain timeframe. When the students met the challenge, they were promised that they could color Easter eggs. Most students in the class had never done this activity within their own homes, so the egg coloring became a favorite activity passed down from group to group (student interviews, 2020).

Students revealed teacher celebration week was another favorite celebration. Each student wrote notes of appreciation to previous teachers, and the notes were delivered to the students’ past teachers through campus mail. Additionally, current teachers in Graduation Reboot were given notes of thanks by each student throughout Teacher Appreciation Week (student and teacher interviews, 2020). All students mentioned the Thanksgiving meal as a beloved tradition; they looked forward to this celebration each year. The staff of Graduation Reboot made a traditional Thanksgiving meal for students.

Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, green beans, etc. were served. Tables were decorated and included enough space for every student to join together for the meal. Students were allowed extra time at lunch to enjoy the meal, play cards, dominos, etc. and enjoy each other's company after the meal. Students noted the small celebrations helped build trust and a community of success.

Teachers pointed out celebrations such as students feeling comfortable to speak to an administration panel about the program, going on a college day field trip to a local university, the Thanksgiving family meal, and, of course, watching students participate in graduation. These were the most significant celebrations to them. During one interview, a teacher described the Thanksgiving meal and how proud she was of the Graduation Reboot students and their behavior during lunch. She mentioned it was exciting to watch various groups playing the same board games that she had played as a kid. She also noted her exhaustion after cooking the homemade pies was worth all of the effort (teacher interview, 2020). Another teacher mentioned how much fun she had with students while on a college field trip. "It was so exciting to see the 'lights go off' in a student's mind as they realized they were going to graduate and the opportunities that lie ahead for each of them were in their grasp" (teacher interview, 2020).

Even with all the most significant milestones that are celebrated in a school, such as graduation, it was evident that, in Graduation Reboot, small steps of progress were recognized as important. All teachers and administrators interviewed felt the small and quick celebrations were key to getting the student "on board" in the very beginning, and continued celebrations were key to keeping the student "on board" throughout their time in the program.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover how an alternative to suspension program, Graduation Reboot, in a large Midwest urban high school influenced motivation for at-risk students to reach academic and behavior goals. Chapter Five presented results of data analysis through the presentation of themes that emerged through the lens of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. Next, Chapter Six presents answers to the research questions and a discussion through the theoretical framework of Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative-to-suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. The theoretical framework selected for this study is Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. Herzberg initially developed his theory as a way to explain employee retention in the business field. This study applies Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation to student experience in schools. Data was collected from a variety of sources including observations, interviews, documents, artifacts, and school website information. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator, and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. Themes were presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Six provides answers to the research questions utilizing the lens of Herzberg's (1959) hygiene and motivational factors to explain these findings. Implications for research, theory and practice are also presented.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation was chosen as the theoretical framework to "provide a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked" (Creswell, 2014, p. 51). Frederick Herzberg is regarded as one of the leading researchers in motivation theory. He spent much of his career as a professor of business, but he may be more recognized for his work with employees and what factors at work determined their satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the job. He explained his theory regarding employee motivation in the work place in the article "One More Time: How do you Motivate Employees," in which he wrote at the "height of the attention on improving employee performance through various (contrived) psychological approaches to human relations" (p. 14).

During his research, Herzberg (1959) interviewed employees regarding what factors helped the individual stay satisfied or dissatisfied at work. Herzberg's findings include a list of motivational and hygiene factors that he used to determine the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for each employee. Herzberg explained he used hygiene factors as one of the categories because he felt a direct link to the definition of personal hygiene or basic personal needs. He claimed that for an individual employee to feel satisfied at work both personal hygiene factors and workplace essentials need to be met.

In addition to hygiene factors, Herzberg claimed there are very distinct needs for each individual that fall into physiological or motivational needs. He explained that both physiological and psychological needs must be met for maximum satisfaction to occur. As shown below in Figure 1, the hygiene factors listed are mostly external factors. He argued that workers may see hygiene and motivational factors as clear incentives to do or

not do something. Herzberg provided nuanced distinction between employee satisfaction versus dissatisfaction, suggesting that because an employee is not satisfied does not result in an assumption that he is dissatisfied. Rather, the worker may or may not be motivated to do their assigned work. Although Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory provides an understanding of employee motivation concerning hygiene and psychological needs in the workplace, it has utility to provide a lens to understand how a student's involvement in the Graduation Reboot program influences motivation to remain in school. Specifically, the theory explains how students are motivated to persist in their educational endeavors when their physiological and psychological needs are met. This theory was applied after themes were identified as a lens to answer the research questions for this study.



Figure 2. Visual representation of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Adapted from "Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory," by NetMBA. Copyright 2010 by the Internet Center for Management and Business Administration.

In comparison, I created the figure below to show a possible list of hygiene and motivational factors students could encounter throughout their educational career.

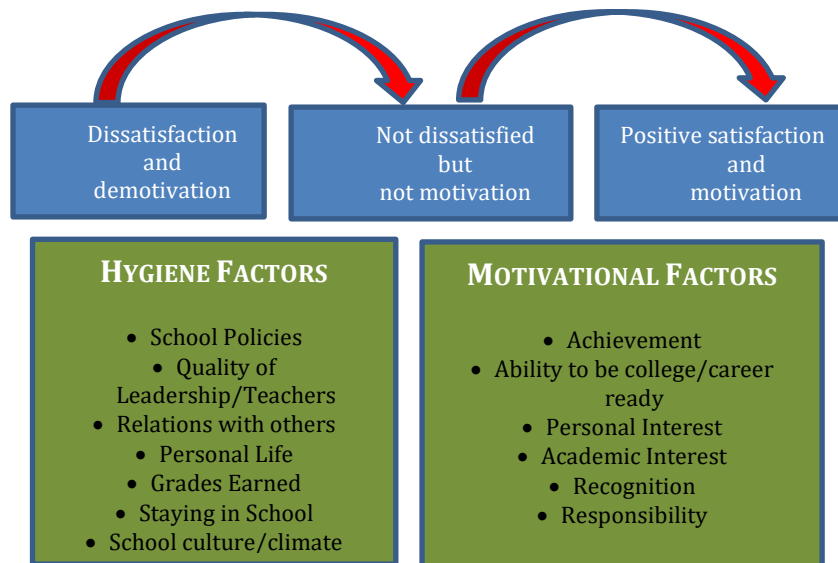


Figure 3. Educational comparisons to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Created by A. McCready, 2020.

The overarching research question for this study was: How does an alternative to suspension program, Graduation Reboot, in a large Midwest urban high school influence motivation for at-risk students to reach academic and behavior goals? Five sub-questions were included to provide a robust answer to the overarching research question.

Answers to the Research Questions

After analyzing data, discovering themes: caring, consistency, communication and celebrations and applying Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, sub-questions one and two were answered almost identically. The term "Graduation Reboot" was used to describe the program as a whole as well as a specific component that could influence a student's motivation and/or academics. Participants felt that Graduation Reboot was an essential program if the district was going to meet the goal of 100% Graduation College and/or Career Ready.

Sub Question One: How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach academic goals?

The program aligns with Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation because both hygiene and motivation factors are present, enabling students to feel satisfied and motivated to work towards their academic goals. Graduation Reboot's core mission as explained by teachers and administrators in interviews is to graduate students. While it would seem natural for the program to have a goal of improving grades, graduation is the ultimate goal for the Graduation Reboot program, and graduation occurs when grades are improved. Improving grades is a step along the way to this ultimate goal. Since the beginning of the program in 2014, 90% of the students have reached their goal of being a high school graduate. All staff interviewed mentioned how the program, as a whole, helped students to improve academically and ultimately graduate. One student said "Being in Graduation Reboot with these teachers motivated me to push myself harder when I was in school to graduate" (student interview, 2020). Another student

said, “Graduation Reboot helped me deal with my family issues so I could focus on school and graduate” (student interview, 2020).

Graduation Reboot teachers noted the learning atmosphere was a factor in students graduating because a student did not want to disappoint the faculty member if they did not graduate. Other teachers and administrators mentioned the sense of pride students felt when they were no longer failing classes and achieved academic growth. Students stayed motivated to continue the positive trend of academic success because of how it made them feel. Graduation Reboot’s tradition of recognizing individual academic success along the way for completing a class, earning credits to acquire their senior student ID and the ultimate celebration of graduation with cap and gown were influences on a student’s motivation to improve academically while in the program. Celebrations were key in a student’s academic success. The findings above align with the themes of caring and celebrations.

Additional Graduation Reboot influences discussed by teachers and administrators in interviews were: smaller learning communities, mental health counselors on site, and opportunities for students to focus on their future. Teachers and administrators described the program as a pathway to success or a program that provided hope (personal interviews, 2020). One administrator described Graduation Reboot as a place for a “handful of students, who take an alternate path to earning their high school diploma and receive personalized instruction in a different format.” Another administrator said, “when students buy into the path, they can focus on what they want to focus on and see the benefit.” Most interviewed discussed the hope that students felt when attending Graduation Reboot. Their perceptions on the influence of Graduation

Reboot on a student's motivation to reach academic goals was summed up in one student interview: "Graduation Reboot is the biggest hope that you are going to get if you really have goals in graduating school and becoming something in life" (student interview, 2020).

Sub-Question Two: What are teachers and administrators perceptions about factors of the Graduation Reboot program that motivate students?

According to Herzberg (1959), workers who are dissatisfied have poor hygiene factors within the workplace. As seen in the figure above, educational hygiene factors could be school policies, quality of leadership in the building, relations with others, personal life, grades earned and building culture. While collecting data, it became apparent that Graduation Reboot focuses on motivational factors and "rebooting" a student's mindset regarding school.

Teachers and administrators had an overall positive perception of Graduation Reboot and the influence specific factors of the program had on student motivation to reach academic goals. Recent student academic failure was common for these students before attending Graduation Reboot. On average, students enter Graduation Reboot with a 1.93 grade point average on a 4.00 scale. When students start the Graduation Reboot program, they are given the opportunity to choose their first few classes, which results in higher levels of confidence. It was important from the initial interview so communicate the expectation of graduation and academic success. During the classroom observation, it appeared that earning a quick success served as a "golden ticket" for students leading to added academic confidence. When the student began to achieve academically, teachers

saw less frustration and less inappropriate behavior. Comments like “I have never passed an essay” and “I can’t believe I actually passed that quiz” were commonly heard among students. Teachers felt the quick student success reduced anxiety. Additionally, after completing two or three classes, student motivation for academic achievement increased because the student experienced some initial academic success and the academic success was celebrated by all involved with the program. Herzberg’s (1959) Two-Factor theory supports the findings of this case study and the perceptions of teachers and administrators that achievement, instead of failure, motivated these students to improve academically.

Herzberg’s (1959) motivational factors included career advancement and personal growth. In an educational setting, this is comparable to high school graduation and the ability to be prepared for college or a career. College and career readiness were discussed during the initial conversation with a student entering Graduation Reboot. This finding aligns with the theme of consistency and communication because constant communication and expectations were laid out for each individual student to achieve their future goals. From the beginning, staff took a personal interest in the success of each student. Planning for the future was important for a student’s motivation, and it also helped to reboot the mindset of “I’m not graduating” to “When I finish my high school diploma, I will...” Teachers and administrators helped students grow personally by focusing on their future and connecting it to the present. Students and teachers often communicated about goals and where each student was along the continuum of achieving said goal. The opportunity for each student to grow personally was a strength of the Graduation Reboot program and a major factor in helping students feel satisfied in school so they could make academic progress.

In addition to the initial discussions regarding college and career preparedness, community partners presented college or career opportunities to Graduation Reboot students throughout the year. Community partners included the local technology school, a local community college, and local workforce partners. Financial aid specialists assisted in filling out scholarship applications or other financial documents so the barrier of cost could be alleviated, allowing students to take the next step in college and/or career readiness. When discussing lessons with a student, Graduation Reboot staff were heard referring to a student's career of choice to make the lesson more relevant to a real-world scenario. The goal was to provide information in a variety of ways, showing the possibilities for each individual student once they earned their high school degree. Discussing future possibilities with students resulted in each student feeling as though someone took a personal interest and believed in them. The staff cared. This finding aligns with the theme of caring as the personal interest taken in each student helped them feel "visible" in class, satisfied in school, and motivated to achieve their academic and personal goals. Using Herzberg's theory as a lens to explain this finding, the idea of personal interest falls in line with a hygiene factor that motivates a student to feel satisfied in school and motivated to earn his diploma.

Sub-Question Three: How do former students, who were at risk of graduation but have completed high school, perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on their motivation to reach academic and behavioral goals?

Students felt Graduation Reboot removed barriers to academic success. Students mentioned Graduation Reboot removed the barrier of "fitting in" a large atmosphere at the high school. Students discussed at length how Graduation Reboot helped them feel

visible to teachers, and consequently students experienced less anxiety and were able to focus on academics when attending Graduation Reboot. Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation helps explain this finding that when students feel accepted in Graduation Reboot, they are motivated to persist academically because of the recognition and personal interest taken in them. For example, teachers, counselors and administrators called students when they were absent. This finding aligns with the caring theme found because students perceived being cared for, and as a result, they would stay in school instead of dropping out. Students indicated that because they felt a connection to the Graduation Reboot program, they developed a sense of personal responsibility for their actions. Additionally, students felt consistency in discipline when needed. Expectations were clear and consequences implemented consistently with each student. Students explained that they worked diligently to follow rules, such as not being truant, so that they would not be suspended from the program. Evidence suggests that students' sense of accomplishment grew as their ownership of the program increased and they cared about staying in the program.

Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation explains this finding in that taking a personal interest in each employee (students in this study) can help to alleviate lack of motivation to learn. During the initial interviews, students stated that their former teachers in the traditional high school setting did not care about them nor take the time to get to know them. They felt overlooked in class. One student stated, "Why should I go to class if they don't even know I am gone?" (student interview, 2020). The student felt invisible while at the high school but thrived on the idea of being noticed and cared about in Graduation Reboot. When discussing prior grades and attendance during intake

interviews, students referred to the relationship they had with the teacher. The students placed the blame for their lack of success on their former teachers and not themselves. “They didn’t like me” was a common statement. Students explained that when they felt teachers did not like or notice them, they lacked motivation to go to class or make academic progress. Herzberg’s (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation also explains this finding because the students often felt disconnected in their previous settings and felt as if they were was invisible. Students were dissatisfied and, in turn, demotivated.

Data also revealed that students felt safe and comfortable discussing details of their personal life with their Graduation Reboot teachers because they felt understood by the adults and received guidance on how to finish the day in school rather than skipping (student and teacher interviews, 2020). In a classroom observation, one student who entered the room immediately asked the teacher to call the counselor to see if he could receive help that day. This finding aligns with the communication theme because in this instance the communication with the staff was key for this student to have success on this particular day. Herzberg’s (1959) theory explains that this student’s act of requesting help indicates that the student is satisfied with school and desires to be successful. Specifically, this student was seeking to change his behavior so he could stay in school. He was willing to communicate about and work on a particular issue that was interfering with his academic progress because he felt connected to the program. He had been noticed by his teacher, and a personal interest had been taken in him. Students also indicated that they appreciated the staff helping them develop a plan for dealing with the chaos or other symptoms of their behavior instead of always resorting to a suspension (student interview, 2020). Further, a “safety net” is provided for a student to use behavior

modification techniques they are learning in their counseling sessions in Graduation Reboot. Increasingly, as students became more comfortable and confident in Graduation Reboot most students found academic success as well as behavior change. Herzberg's (1959) theory explains that these students are experiencing personal growth, and therefore, are satisfied in school and motivated to continue improving academically and behaviorally.

Sub-Question Four: How do teachers and administrators perceive the influence of Graduation Reboot on student motivation to reach behavior goals?

Analysis of data from this study suggests the Graduation Reboot program had an influence on student motivation to reach behavioral goals. Both teachers and administrators recognized the large population of the high school as a hindrance for some students. Large class sizes resulted in less opportunities for personalization, causing dissatisfaction, and for some students, demotivation to behave appropriately. The next findings specifically aligns with the theme of communication or what Administrators referred to "straight talk" as a reason that students felt connected and compelled to continue in Graduation Reboot. Graduation Reboot staff were able to create relationships and communicate in more detail the aspects of a student's habits that could help improve academic success and school behavior. The small size of Graduation Reboot was helpful to build trust in order to communicate using "straight talk." Establishing trust often alleviated some of the personal issues that served as barriers to coming to class or acting appropriately. Instead of personal life being a hygiene factor that initiated dissatisfaction and demotivation, Graduation Reboot used a student's personal life as an opportunity to increase positive relations with students and help each feel cared about. Teachers and

administrators explained that, the more students connected with school, the more they were motivated to behave appropriately.

Herzberg's (1959) theory can explain this finding in that company policies were a factor that could impact an employee's satisfaction and motivation to be successful at work. In this study, it appears that school policies may also explain student motivation to behave appropriately in class. Teachers explained that, in a large building, school policies are not always in place to address the students' individual needs but rather, to keep order. For example, students described discipline in their former settings as impersonal and sometimes, in their eyes, inconsistent. This finding aligns with the theme of consistency as is important for a student to meet behavior goals. For these students, discipline actually separated them from school when their individual needs were not addressed or considered. Time was also a contributing factor for ineffective enforcement of a discipline policy. Administrators in this study explained that with a caseload of approximately five hundred students per administrator, it is not feasible to take the appropriate amount of time to understand why the individual is acting in a certain way. While the school policies are still in place in Graduation Reboot, time can be spent understanding why the student is acting in a certain way, and a viable solution to the problem can be discussed.

Sub Question Five: What other realities presented?

Teachers explained that for some students, thinking too far into the future could be problematic. Some students struggled to imagine a time when they would graduate because of their past academic failures. While students experienced an enhanced sense of optimism for their future and motivational factors were at an increased level, for some,

staying motivated to persist in coursework was a day-to-day struggle to realize their potential.

An additional reality that presented was that the ten-month calendar timeline that this school adheres to could be challenging. For some students, attending Graduation Reboot beginning in August until school was out in May was not enough time to change behavior or gain the confidence to improve academically. Data indicated that for the vast majority of Graduation Reboot students, motivation to improve academically and behave appropriately was enhanced after a period of time; however, that time period varied from student to student. For most students, they were able to graduate in May of their original graduation year. In other instances, students who were scheduled to graduate were continuing to work toward earning their diplomas. At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, there were 37 students who had not completed their high school diploma out of 359 students served through Graduation Reboot since 2014. The numbers reflected do not include students who left the program to attend another school or students who may have continued their education while being incarcerated. This concept of a student still working towards a diploma, even after their time had passed to graduate on time, aligns with Herzberg's findings. He suggested that, for some employees (in this case students), the hygiene and motivation factors are in place; however the student is neither dissatisfied and demotivated nor satisfied and motivated, but work continues to occur.

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that the Graduation Reboot program is largely successful in providing the support needed for at-risk students to enhance their motivation and ability to feel satisfied in school. The program boasts a 90% graduation

rate. Furthermore, discipline events have dropped to approximately only 10% of the students encountering some type suspension while in the program. These findings suggest that the connections made through the trusting relationships formed in Graduation Reboot provided the support that the students needed to persist in their efforts. The themes: caring, consistency, communication and celebrations, align with Herzberg's (1959) Two-factor Theory of Motivation in that the hygiene and motivational factors Graduation Reboot includes in the programming help to influence a student's mindset to reach academic goals and decrease behavioral events.

Findings during this study also suggest that these students needed to feel success in order to be motivated to persist in their educational goals, which also aligned with Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor theory. When these students did not achieve academically or feel successful, their school performance suffered even further. For example, lack of academic success led to poor attendance, failing grades and multiple behavior events. This particular finding supports much of the current research that has been completed around suspension indicating a student's achievement will be affected during a suspension (Hemphill & Quinn, 2014; Mcloughlin, Noltemeyer & Ward, 2015; Morris & Perry, 2016). This finding aligns with the theory from Herzberg (1959) when he indicated an employee may be dissatisfied and also demotivated to do work to the best of their abilities. Evidence from this study suggests that these students were able to change course quickly when they were able to be a participant in their education and have an increased number of motivational factors such as feeling cared for or celebrating academic wins, within the system in which they were receiving their education. Graduation Reboot allows for student participation when they choose a class to work on or participate in

college and career presentations that focus on their future. Focusing on the future in Herzberg's theory was a motivational factor that led employees to be satisfied and motivated to do work.

These findings further suggest that when these students did not feel connected to school or cared about, they quickly become disengaged. Before attending Graduation Reboot, students seemed to not take responsibility for their part in failing a class. Instead, they perceived their lack of success was the fault of their teacher. However, close relationships and consistent expectations provided a platform for personal responsibility for these students. Applying Herzberg's (1959) theory as the lens, these findings support the idea that these students were re-engaged by a structured, methodical approach in a different setting that included opportunities to feel cared for, be communicated with consistently and celebrated.

Implications for Research

This study provided understandings of teacher, administrator, and student perspectives of the influence of an alternative to suspension program on student motivation to persist in educational pursuits. Findings from this study highlight the importance of relationships for student success. Specifically, students felt disconnected from the school in their prior school experiences. Graduation Reboot, however, provided a structured approach to support healthy teacher/student and student/student relationships. In their former experiences, when the student misbehaved, the behavior was addressed rather than the underlying cause of the behavior. This study suggests that the importance of a student's sense of being understood and safe in an environment helped to expose the

challenges that he/she was experiencing outside of the school setting. When school personnel gained a better understanding of a student's life context, they were more able to effectively address behavior problems such as truancy, disrespect, and other negative behaviors.

This study also added to understandings regarding how these students, who were formerly at-risk to not graduate from high school, gained the motivation to persist in their academic pursuits. This study highlighted the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the program that worked together for student success. Additional research is needed to understand how these factors function in other types of programs that meet at-risk student needs through increased understanding of hygiene and motivational factors within schools.

Implications for Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation (1959) is a theory that has been used to explain business employees' dissatisfaction or satisfaction and motivation regarding work. However, this study applied this theory to the educational setting and explained how motivational factors may influence academic success while decreasing behavior incidents in schools. It also proposed possible hygiene factors that apply to school settings, advancing the applicability of the theory. Even though the theory was presented over 70 years ago, it may still have utility for explaining student motivation to persist in meeting educational goals. Additional research is needed utilizing this theory as a lens to further understand the application of Herzberg's work in educational settings.

Implications for Practice

Schools have long had the practice of educating the whole child; however, this study examines more carefully the motivational factors that were necessary in the Graduation Reboot program to educate these students who were at risk. Although these findings are not generalizable, they indicate that, in this setting, re-evaluating school policies has been the key to helping these at-risk students. Often, when a student misbehaves, the consequence is applied to the behavior instead of delving deeper and finding the root cause of the behavior. This study reveals the importance of Graduation Reboot students feeling safe enough in the school setting to uncover the challenges that they were experiencing outside of the school setting. Findings from this study suggest that, in the Graduation Reboot program, taking time to speak to students and delve deeper in to the child's feelings and life outside of school removed some of the obstacles that prevented their success. Some obstacles included chronic absenteeism and inappropriate behavior. For the teacher participants in this study, it was imperative that they found ways within their classroom practices to mitigate obstacles to learning, as conceptualized in this study as negative hygiene factors and increase motivational factors. Allowing students to feel connected and cared for motivated them to reach academic goals and lessen behavior distractions. While not generalizable, findings from this study may be transferable to settings with similar contexts. Therefore, findings from this study may be used to inform practices for working with at-risk students in large districts where students may feel "invisible" or "lost" among their peers.

Recommendation for Future Research

The following future recommendations for research are made in addition to this type of case study using Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. This same

study could be replicated in other alternative-to-suspension programs to gain a better understanding of hygiene factors present in those programs and to observe whether students respond similarly by improving hygiene factors within the school setting. Other programs, in addition to Graduation Reboot, could be studied to include a larger sample of students as well as a more diverse population of students. Finally, all students could benefit from experiencing more caring, communication, consistency and celebrating. This study could be replicated in a regular school to observe whether students respond similarly as at-risk students did in this study.

Only ten participants were interviewed for this study. Of the five students interviewed, four had completed their diplomas and the fifth student is still actively pursuing goals toward graduation. Increasing the sample size of students that have attended an alternative-to-suspension program and including those that may not have completed and are no longer pursuing the high school diploma would provide additional understandings of the motivational factors that help students improve academically. A final recommendation is perhaps replicating this study using relational theories instead of Herzberg's Two-Factor theory to add to existing data on student success. This could enhance the data found in this research study and support that the themes found are important in all educational settings for student success in academics and behavior.

Summary

Schools across the United States are challenged with the responsibility to promote success for all students as required by the No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, 2017). Yet, an increased

understanding of ways to keep students in school has gained enhanced attention in educational research (Balfanz et al., 2013; Bridgeland & Balfanz, 2009; Brownstein, 2010). To help reduce the number of students dropping out of school, educational institutions have turned to alternative school settings as a means to reengage students who struggle in traditional classroom environments. Various educational options stretching from independent study programs to charter schools to schools within schools (Aron, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002) have all been classified as an “alternative setting” for students who are at risk of not completing high school. Research suggests that school practices can actually influence students leaving school early (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Willoughby, 2012). Suspension policies, in particular, can be a driving force in a student dropping out when these policies mandate a student be sent home for inappropriate behavior (Bakman, 2017; Browne-Dianis, 2011; Brownstein, 2010; Cornell et al., 2011; DeRidder, 1991). Despite the intended consequences of this form of discipline (i.e. teaching students to behave appropriately), unintended consequences can also occur. The intent of most school suspension programs is to improve behavior and encourage academic progress. However, an anomaly exists for some students because studies suggest that a suspension reinforces bad behavior as opposed to changing a behavior or encouraging a more acceptable behavior (Brownstein, 2010). Additionally, suspension may actually hinder, rather than promote, academic growth for suspended students.

Chapter II offered a review of the literature that helped to better understand the research that currently exists on this topic. Specifically, the following topics were addressed: the history and purpose of school discipline, the effects of suspension on

students, potential alternatives to suspension programs that exist, and how schools define success of a suspended student. Finally, the literature review concluded with an explanation of potential alternatives to current suspension programs that will support the learning environment.

Chapter III included the research methods and procedures applied in this study, including participant selection, data collection, and data analysis techniques. Researcher background and bias were addressed as well as how access was gained to various suspension programs. Trustworthiness and limitations of the study concluded Chapter III.

Chapter IV presented the data and provided a thick, rich description of the program analyzed as well as who participated in the study. All data collected through interviews, observations, artifacts, and field notes were presented in detail. The data was analyzed and presented through the lens of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation in Chapter V.

Chapter VI presented answers to research questions and a discussion through the theoretical framework of Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation. The chapter also included implications of the study including the significance of the study to practice, to research, and to theory. Recommendations for future research were provided and concluded the chapter.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Email of Permission for Access

Dr. _____:

Attached you will find information regarding my request to complete my dissertation research for my doctoral studies at Oklahoma State University.

I have attached the following to this e-mail:

1. A copy of my research proposal. I am requesting to study how an alternative to suspension program, Graduation Reboot, influences motivation for students to reach academic and behavior goals. I plan to complete interviews with building principals, previous Graduation Reboot staff and previous Graduation Reboot students over the age of 18 for my research.
2. A copy of the proposed consent form that participants will be required to sign. This consent is part of my IRB application and contingent approval.
3. A copy of the email I received from OSU stating I have been admitted in to the Doctoral Candidacy program and my proposal has been approved.

This proposal, consent form and email should address items A-G outlined in Board Policy #1750 titled "Obligations of the Researcher." The IRB approval has been granted pending approval from the district for my study. Once I receive the district permission and the IRB has final approval, I will send a letter from Dr. Curry confirming the committee approval for my research at OSU.

In regards to item H, I hereby agree to forward an abstract of the final dissertation to yourself, Dr. _____, and any other district staff you deem appropriate.

Please let me know if you need any other specific information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amy McCready

APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction

(This letter will be sent to all potential Administrator, Teachers and Student study participants)

To:

From: amy.mccready@okstate.edu

Re: Research Assistance Needed

Dear _____:

My name is Amy McCready and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University and am pursuing a degree in school administration. In fulfillment of the research component required of students in Oklahoma State's Doctoral program, I have chosen to conduct a case study regarding Graduation Reboot and the influence the alternative to suspension program has on motivation of students with regards to behavior and academics. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study based on your association with Graduation Reboot.

I have been given permission by Dr. Nelson, Senior Executive Director of Research Design, and Assessment, to work with administrators, teachers and students, over the age of 18 as part of my study. In the coming months, I will be seeking those associated with the Graduation Reboot program to participate in the study.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact me through my email (amy.mccready@okstate.edu) or by calling me at 913.221.7625.

Sincerely,

Amy McCready

Doctoral Candidate, School Administration

Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX C
Interview Request Email

(This email will be sent to potential Administrator, Teachers and Student study participants)

To:

From: amy.mccready@okstate.edu

Re: Research Participation Request

Dear _____:

My name is Amy McCready and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Oklahoma State University. In fulfillment of the research component required of students in Oklahoma State's Doctoral program, I have chosen to conduct a case study regarding Graduation Reboot and the influence Graduation Reboot has on motivation of students with regards to behavior and academics. Permission has been granted from the district to allow administrators, teachers and students over 18 to participate in this study.

I am currently seeking volunteers willing to participate in a one-hour interview. I will audio record the interviews on my iPhone/iPad so that I may later transcribe the interviews in a word-for-word format to effectively analyze the content.

Your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and your identity will be carefully and respectfully guarded. If at any time, you feel the need to withdraw from the study, you are welcome to do so. This study is connected in no way to your performance or evaluation in the district. The data gathered from this study will be used to inform ways in which the Graduation Reboot program influences motivation on behavior and academics for the students who have participated in the ASPRIE program.

All findings and subsequent published material referencing this study will maintain the confidentiality of the school district and the specific participants. As participants, your decision to participate will be withheld from district administration. He/she will not be

given access to either your decision to participate or your response. To ensure representation of participants' words and ideas, a scripted copy of your interview will be provided to you prior to the analysis of the data. And concerns, additions, or deletions will be made as noted by the participants.

If you are willing to participate in this study and complete interviews, please contact me through my email (amy.mccready@okstate.edu) or by calling me at 913.221.7625. I will be contacting those of you indicate an interview in participating and will make every effort to comply with your schedule and preferences for date/time for interviews.

Thank you. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Amy McCready

Doctoral Candidate, School Administration

Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX D

Participant Consent Form - Survey



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND AVIATION

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - SURVEY PUSHED OUT OR KEPT IN: HOW AN ALTERNATIVE TO SUSPENSION INFLUENCES STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF HERZBERG'S TWO-FACTOR MOTIVATION THEORY: A CASE STUDY

Key Information

Study Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion.

Major Procedures of the Study: Identified Administrator, Teachers and Students will be asked to complete a personal interview

Duration of Participation: The data will be collected from March 2020 – April 2020

Significant Risks: There are no known risks to participation other than those encountered in everyday life.

Potential Benefits: The data gathered from this study will be used to inform ways in which the Graduation Reboot program influences motivation on behavior and academics

for the students who have participated in the Graduation Reboot program.

Compensation: None.

Background Information

You are invited to be in a research study is to help understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. You were selected as a possible participant because you have taught in the Graduation Reboot program. We ask that you read and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

This study is being conducted by: Amy McCready, Oklahoma State University Doctoral Candidate, College of Education, Health, and Aviation, School Administration, under the direction of Dr. Kathy Curry, School of Educational Foundation, Leadership, and Aviation, Oklahoma State University.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Complete the following survey. If follow-up questions are needed, I will contact you via email for an additional meeting time.

Participation in the study involves the following time commitment: The survey will last no more than one hour of your time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

There are no known risks associated with this project, which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

There are no direct benefits to you. More broadly, this study may help the researchers learn more about the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating student's motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion.

Compensation

You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/pseudonym. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. This informed consent will be kept for three years after the study is

complete, and then it will be destroyed. Your data collected as part of this research project, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others responsible for research oversight may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. The alternative is to not participate. You can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable and can stop the survey at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect you.

Contacts and Questions

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Oklahoma State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 913.221.7625, amy.mccready@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about concerns regarding this study, please contact the IRB at (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent – will be a check box on the survey

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Indicate Yes or No:

I give consent to be contacted for follow-up in this study or future similar studies:

Yes No

Signature: _____ esignature _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E
Participant Consent



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND AVIATION

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
PUSHED OUT OR KEPT IN: HOW AN ALTERNATIVE TO SUSPENSION
INFLUENCES STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF HERZBERG'S TWO-FACTOR
MOTIVATION THEORY: A CASE STUDY

Key Information

Study Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion.

Major Procedures of the Study: Identified Administrator, Teachers and Students will be asked to complete a personal interview

Duration of Participation: The data will be collected from March 2020 – April 2020

Significant Risks: There are no known risks to participation other than those encountered in everyday life.

Potential Benefits: The data gathered from this study will be used to inform ways in which the Graduation Reboot program influences motivation on behavior and academics for the students who have participated in the ASPRIE program.

Compensation: None.

Background Information

You are invited to be in a research study is to help understand teacher, administrator and student perceptions regarding the influence of an alternative to suspension program on

participating students' motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion. You were selected as a possible participant because you have recommended students to Graduation Reboot, taught in Graduation Reboot or been a student in the Graduation Reboot program. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

This study is being conducted by: Amy McCready, Oklahoma State University Doctoral Candidate, College of Education, Health, and Aviation, School Administration, under the direction of Dr. Kathy Curry, School of Educational Foundation, Leadership, and Aviation, Oklahoma State University.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: Complete an in-person interview in March 2020 or April 2020. You will be audio-recorded. If follow-up questions are needed, I will contact you via email for an additional meeting time.

Participation in the study involves the following time commitment: The interview process will last no more than one hour of your time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

There are no known risks associated with this project, which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

There are no direct benefits to you. More broadly, this study may help the researchers learn more about the influence of an alternative to suspension program on participating student's motivation to learn and progress toward high school completion.

Compensation

You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number/pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report

We will collect your information through in-person interviews and audio recordings. This information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a restricted-access office on an

encrypted flash drive. Any identifiers will be destroyed by April 30, 2020. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the code list linking names to study numbers will be destroyed. This is expected to occur no later than April 30, 2020. Audio recordings and other data collected will be destroyed within one month of the interview. The audio/video recording will be transcribed. The recording will be deleted after the transcription is complete and verified. This process should take approximately four weeks. This informed consent form will be kept for three years after the study is complete, and then it will be destroyed. Your data collected as part of this research project, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others responsible for research oversight may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. The alternative is to not participate. You can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable and can stop the interview/survey at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your employment or grades in school.

Contacts and Questions

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Oklahoma State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 913.221.7625, amy.mccready@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about concerns regarding this study, please contact the IRB at (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Indicate Yes or No:

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Yes No

I give consent to be contacted for follow-up in this study or future similar studies:

Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F
Interview Questions

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you become interested in education as a profession?
2. How did you become interested in working with the Graduation Reboot program?
3. What has been your experience with the Graduation Reboot program? Please explain
4. Could you please describe the Graduation Reboot program to me?
5. Could you please describe a student who is a potential candidate for the program?
6. Can you please give me an example of a student who has been successful in the program?
7. Can you please give me an example of a student who has not been successful in the program?
8. In your experience, how have you seen the program motivate students?
9. How changes do you see in students after they begin participating in the Graduation Reboot program?
10. Can you please provide some examples?
11. In your opinion, why do you think these changes have occurred?

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. How would you describe your school experience K – 11th grade?
3. Did you have a time period when you did not attend school? Please explain.
4. Could you please describe the Graduation Reboot program to me?

5. What has been your experience with the Graduation Reboot program? Please explain
6. Give an example of why you were successful/not successful in the program.
7. In your experience, how do you feel the program motivated you?
8. Did you feel you feel you changed after beginning the Graduation Reboot program? Please explain.
9. Can you please provide some examples?
10. In your opinion, why do you think these changes have occurred?

APPENDIX G
Survey Questions

TEACHER SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How did you become interested in education as a profession?
2. How did you become interested in working with the Graduation Reboot program?
3. What has been your experience with the Graduation Reboot program? Please explain
4. Could you please describe the Graduation Reboot program to me?
5. Could you please describe a student who is a potential candidate for the program?
6. Can you please give me an example of a student who has been successful in the program?
7. Can you please give me an example of a student who has not been successful in the program?
8. In your experience, how have you seen the program motivate students?
9. How changes do you see in students after they begin participating in the Graduation Reboot program?
10. Can you please provide some examples?
11. In your opinion, why do you think these changes have occurred?

VITA

Amy Richan McCready

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: PUSHED OUT OR KEPT IN: HOW AN ALTERNATIVE TO
SUSPENSION INFLUENCES STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR AND
ACADEMIC ACHIEVMENT

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School
Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
December, 2020.

Completed the requirements for the Administrative Certification at University
of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri in 2003.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Physical Education at
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas in 1999.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Secondary
Education at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska in 1993.

Experience:

Union Public Schools ♦ Tulsa, OK 2006 – Present
Administrator

Blue Valley Northwest High School ♦ Overland Park, KS 1993 – 2006
Teacher/Administrator