RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI): A MIXED METHODS STUDY EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF BEHAVIOR TRAINING SOFTWARE ON BEHAVIOR OF IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Excessive classroom disruption is prevalent among today’s public high schools and is a deterrent to the academic and social achievements of students. Using Response to Intervention (RtI) to equip in-school suspension (ISS) programs with a research-based behavioral curriculum is one possible solution to efficiently and cost-effectively remediating the behaviors of at-risk students. Further investigation of this problem was necessary in order to evaluate its effectiveness; therefore, a software-based behavioral intervention program called Ripple Effects® for Teens was integrated into the ISS program of a high school. A mixed-methods approach was used to evaluate the outcome of the intervention on the recidivism rates of students assigned to ISS and to explore students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of the effects of the intervention on student behavior. Data consisting of ISS attendance rates over a period of three years was analyzed to establish a baseline comparison to attendance rates during the intervention year. A statistically significant decrease in recidivism rates of students in grade nine was found when compared to the intervention year. When the effects of the intervention were analyzed across subgroups, a significant interaction was found across gender indicating that males who received the intervention had fewer overall visits to ISS than males who did not receive the intervention. Further analyses found that black students at the site school attended ISS significantly more often than white students, and students who experienced academic failure attended ISS more frequently than students who had not failed one or more class. Generally, students who received the intervention were reassigned to ISS less frequently overall. Focus groups were conducted to determine participant perception of a curriculum using observational learning methods exposed to students through a brief ISS assignment. Student self-efficacy was also explored, and it was found that students in earlier grades believed Ripple Effects® for Teens to be a contributor of
increased behavioral awareness. Inclusively, the findings promoted using in-school suspension programs as an effective means of delivering RtI interventions to behaviorally at-risk students in a high school. However, the findings also indicated a need for program modifications in order to have a stronger influence on reducing recidivism rates of students across all grade levels.

*Key Words:* Response to Intervention (RtI); in-school suspension; recidivism; social learning theory; observational learning; self-efficacy; software-based behavior intervention; outcome evaluation
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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

For many years, exclusionary practices such as out-of-school suspension and expulsions have been used as disciplinary consequences by local educating agencies as a method of removing problematic students from the school environment for a period of time based on behavioral offenses. Exclusionary practices gained popularity among public school leaders in the mid-1990s when “Zero-Tolerance” policies were enacted to combat the issue of drugs and weapons being brought by students onto school campuses, and while out-of-school suspension and expulsion are appropriate behavioral consequences for the most dangerous and destructive behaviors, using exclusionary practices as punishment for minor offenses is considerably less effective (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009). To further negate the use of exclusionary practices with minor offenses, public school administrators, at the urging of state- and district-level leaders seeking to improve student attendance, academic performance, and graduation rates, are being pushed to consider alternatives to out-of-school suspension that will keep students succeeding within the school environment (Ray, Patterson, & Berg, 2008).

Another major concern with using exclusionary practices as a behavioral consequence is that the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates that an exceptional education student (any student who has been classified with having a disability) does not receive an out-of-school suspension term of more than ten days per school year without an official change in placement. On the other hand, a regular education student (any student who has not been classified under IDEA as having a disability) is not regulated by the IDEA (2004) and is permitted to receive out-of-school suspension terms of more than ten days per school year. The variation in allowable consequences for poor behavior of the separate student groups has left
school leaders with the complex duty of imposing behavioral consequences for similar violations that are legally appropriate and evenly balanced for all students within their individual school populations.

One popular alternative is the use of in-school suspension, which is a behavior consequence that is eligible to be assigned to any student within a school population (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). A majority of the high schools in the United States have taken this approach to removing problematic students from the classroom while simultaneously providing a structured educational environment to complete assignments, which serves as an acceptable IDEA alternative to out-of-school suspension by permitting exceptional education students to remain in school avoiding a change of placement concern (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). However, opponents of in-school suspension programs argue that improvements are needed because, although students receiving in-school suspension as a behavioral consequence are housed inside the school, they are disengaged from learning and fail to receive personalized behavior curriculum to help with improving problem behavior before returning to the regular classroom (Michail, 2011). Providing justification for this argument, the U. S. Department of Education (2008) reported that, out of 87% of public high schools using in-school suspension as a behavioral consequence, 14% of those established programs provided no curriculum services to students. Because recent studies do show that in-school suspension programs are more effective when targeted remedial behavior strategies are provided to students before returning to a regular classroom setting (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Simonsen, Jeffrey-Pearsall, Sugai, & McCurdy, 2011), a viable solution to the classroom behavior problems plaguing high schools today could be structuring in-school suspension programs in a way that provides students with the means to change poor behaviors when presented with the opportunity to do so.
A potential key to providing that structure in public high schools could be the implementation of Response to Intervention-Behavior (RtI-B) systems. One purpose of the RtI-B process is to decrease exclusionary consequences by reducing classroom behavioral interruptions, which, in turn, improves instructional time (McCurdy, 2011). Response to Intervention-Behavior models help to do this by focusing specifically on using intensive research-based behavioral support strategies with students identified as at-risk, which would apply to the high school student receiving repeated assignments to in-school suspension. However, because of the intensive research-based element that is characteristic of RtI-B systems, the in-school suspension program would have to include this component in order to use in-school suspension as a venue of delivering individualized RtI supports to students. In order to make this association of RtI-B to in-school suspension, there are challenges that school leaders must overcome in selecting, purchasing, implementing, and sustaining research-based behavioral strategies within the obscure environment of a high school typically consisting of a large number of students and strict scheduling constraints (National High School Center, National Center on Response to Intervention, and Center on Instruction, 2010). Fortunately, the IDEA (2004) permits up to 15% of Part B federal funding to be used toward the implementation of these early intervening services, which could provide the financial support schools need to help alleviate some of these challenges.

Ultimately, by using in-school suspension as a venue for implementing RtI-B interventions, high school leaders would be provided with an additional opportunity outside of the traditional classroom to remediate the behavior of all at-risk students, while at the same time adhering to IDEA disciplinary regulations. If in-school suspension supervisory personnel continue to use in-school suspension as a “holding cell” versus providing necessary tools to
students for modifying the problem behaviors that put the student there to begin with, then the true purpose of the program is being defeated. This study addresses the problem of high school in-school suspension programs that lack a behavioral modification curriculum component by evaluating whether or not a computerized intervention program that aligns with the RtI-B research-based intervention requirements will have any effect on the recidivism rates of students assigned to in-school suspension.

**Significance of the Problem**

Maintaining school discipline is a necessary component of providing a constructive learning environment for students and assuring a safe and productive working environment for teachers (Cameron, 2006). Studies show that students who demonstrate defiant behaviors at school are at an increased risk for academic failure, criminal activity, absenteeism, dropout, and gang affiliation (Gilbert, Chessor, Perz, & Ussher, 2010; Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009; Michail, 2011). Additionally, it has been reported that 34% of secondary teachers, a higher percentage than elementary teachers, have conveyed that student misbehavior, tardiness, and absences interfered with their ability to teach effectively ultimately resulting in a decline of student academic performance (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Cameron, 2006). Moreover, according to the U. S. Department of Education (2012), 9% of school leaders described student acts of disrespect toward teachers as occurring at least once per week during the 2009-2010 school year.

When excessive student misbehavior occurs, this often results in exclusionary consequences to include out-of-school suspensions and expulsions that remove students from the school, as well as in-school suspensions that remove students from the classroom. A frequent belief is that students attending school are positively engaged with learning and socializing and
that suspension serves as a punishment by isolating students from those privileges (Michail, 2011). However, it has been found that students who are excluded from school communities often experience feelings of shame, resentment, frustration, and alienation which can increase the likelihood of engagement in antisocial behavior (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009; Partington, 2001; Taylor & Fairgray, 2005). Additionally, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions often leave students unsupervised in the home or on the streets, opening the door for involvement in other potentially harmful and illegal activities (Brownstein, 2009). Studies also show that isolation and social exclusion limits learning opportunities increasing the chances of student dropout (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009; Taylor & Fairgray, 2005). To illustrate, a study by Hemphill and Hargreaves (2009) showed that students who were suspended from school were 50% more likely to engage in disruptive behavior and 70% more likely to engage in aggressive behavior within the subsequent 12-month period.

A recent report published by the U. S. Department of Education (2006) states that over three million students nationwide were either suspended or expelled from school during the 2006 school year. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), the entire southeast region of the United States, specifically the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi, accounted for a majority of the lowest high school graduation rates (less than 70%) in the country during the 2008-2009 school year. The site school that is the setting for this study is located in the southeast region of the United States which provides further support of the need for a closer examination of research-based behavioral curriculum and improvements to in-school suspension programs already in place. Yet another report revealed that 39% of public schools took at least one serious disciplinary action against a student during the 2009-2010 school year, and of those 433,800 disciplinary actions, 74% accounted for
suspensions from school of five days or more (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). These excessive numbers reported over a recent five-year period confirm the magnitude of this problem and support a need for research of behavioral intervention programs focused on reducing behavioral interruptions altogether and keeping students in school to completion.

**Positionality Statement**

For the past three years, the researcher has been employed as the coordinator of an in-school suspension program in an urban high school located in the southeast region of the United States. During this time, the researcher has observed the repeat occurrences of students assigned in-school suspension to be a yearly average of 48%, 49%, and 46%, respectively. During this three year period, the researcher has also been involved in the early implementation stages of an RtI-B model within the school. Because RtI is considered an early intervening system to assist struggling students by providing research-based interventions (McCurdy, 2011), the researcher believes that in-school suspension within a high school could be structured in such a way that deems it an appropriate RtI research-based tiered intervention.

Overall, the researcher’s work in both of these areas has brought about a strong interest in ways of making high school in-school suspension programs more results-focused instead of simply using it as a containment solution for behaviorally deficient students. Throughout this process, the researcher has discovered that in order to improve in-school suspension programs, students assigned to in-school suspension as a behavior consequence need to be provided with behavioral intervention strategies that can be used to reduce problem behaviors occurring in the classroom environment (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Simonsen et al., 2011). Despite this discovery, the researcher has also exposed factors that make this a difficult task for the in-school suspension educator to accomplish.
First, providing individualized interventions to students through in-school suspension programs is difficult when most programs are staffed with only one educational professional and up to 30 students who have been placed there at any given time for a variety of behavioral offenses. Second, a student may spend only one to five days in in-school suspension making it difficult to provide adequate behavior intervention curriculum within that brief time frame. The researcher proposes that a computer-based behavior curriculum approach may be the most efficient way for a solitary in-school suspension educator to provide individualized behavior remediation to a large number of students assigned to in-school suspension. Using computer-assisted instructional materials that use a vast array of behavioral intervention topics and strategies in this type of environment would provide an educational opportunity where multiple students in an in-school suspension setting could receive individualized instruction while simultaneously allowing the educational professional to serve as facilitator and observer of student progress.

Lastly, the researcher in this study was a classroom teacher of high school students of all grade levels (nine through twelve) and learning levels (from below grade level learners to above grade level learners) for five years before transitioning into the behavioral position currently held. For this reason, the researcher is familiar with the disruptive classroom behaviors of students and with the disciplinary processes that the site school currently has in place. The researcher can also relate well to the faculty perspectives on the use of in-school suspension to remove problematic students from the classroom because the researcher was still a classroom teacher at the site school during the first year that the in-school suspension program was implemented. These aspects will provide the researcher with an emic view, an insider’s perspective of reality, and an overall advantage when interviewing and interpreting the focus
group data of students, faculty, and administrative participants (Fraenkel, Wallen, Hyun, 2012). The researcher has chosen to conduct an inside evaluation because of the special interest the researcher has in exploring the fundamentals of the in-school suspension program and behavior improvement at the site school. The knowledge gained through this study will be valuable to faculty and administrative members at the site school, as well as to district-level administrators who are continually striving to advance in a positive manner the disciplinary practices in the secondary schools throughout the district.

**Research Questions**

Creswell (2009) discusses the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative research questions in mixed-methods studies in order to “narrow and focus the purpose” of the study (p. 138). Additionally, in a two-phase research project (such as the current study), the researcher should present the questions in the order in which they will be addressed (Creswell, 2009). In the first phase of this study, the following quantitative research questions guided the evaluation of changes in behavior for in-school suspension students who received the Ripple Effects® for Teens software behavior intervention curriculum, and identified variables that could be a contributing factor to the repeat occurrences:

1. To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences?

2. To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students?
In the second phase of the study, the following qualitative research question guided the researcher in understanding how the student, teacher, and administrative participants of the study interpreted the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum as implemented through in-school suspension. At this stage, the researcher learned how the student participants, through the use of observational learning, make sense of the behavior modification strategies provided in the intervention and why they believed it has or has not been effective in modifying their behaviors. Additionally, student self-efficacy was explored by getting student perspective on what they believed to be the effects of the intervention on their behavior:

3. What are the students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program in improving the overall behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school?

Structuring the research questions in this manner was not only telling in whether or not using a social learning computer-based intervention approach as an RtI Tier II intervention for remediating behaviors of students attending in-school suspension, but the questions also clarified the extent to which using a computer-based behavior intervention is an appropriate curriculum with at-risk students in this type of environment.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are used in research to organize and give meaning to information and to provide a framework for researchers to view, analyze, and interpret facts (Miller, 2011). Mixed-methods research designs typically use a theoretical lens to guide the research study (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, Mertens (2003) discussed how it is appropriate in mixed-methods research to use a theoretical framework to guide studies focusing on “gender, race or ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or other bases of diversity” (p. 135-164). This study focused on academically and
behaviorally at-risk high school students of various learning levels and socioeconomic strata. For this reason, the researcher in this study used a theoretical framework to foster a better understanding of these variables as they relate to the social learning processes of at-risk students assigned to in-school suspension.

**Social learning theory.** The theoretical framework selected to guide this study is social learning theory. Social learning theory is embedded in many of the basic concepts of traditional learning theory, but focuses on socialization which is a term used by sociologists to describe the efforts of the carriers of a society’s dominant ways of life to shape the values and conduct of others who are less integrated into those ways of life (Brint, 2006). The field of social learning originally emerged in the 1930s at Yale University when a graduate seminar explored the causes of aggression, and social learning continued to develop throughout the 1950s into a belief that personality is learned and that children could be taught to behave like the model adults of a society by socializing them into that society (Miller, 2011). Despite early beginnings and many contributions to the study of social learning, the psychological theorist most associated with the overall expansion of social learning theory is Albert Bandura (as cited in Miller, 2011). Bandura is responsible for further developing social learning to include the components of observational learning and self-efficacy. The characteristics of observational learning and self-efficacy were specifically used to guide a deeper understanding of remediating the behaviors of the at-risk high school students in this study. The following paragraphs will address these specific aspects of social learning and how they were used as a framework for this study.

**Observational learning.** Bandura, in a Social Learning Theory book that he published in 1977, offered a clear and concise explanation of observational learning:
Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 22)

Bandura’s observational learning attribute proposes that people learn new information and behaviors, not only from their own experiences, but by observing in a social environment the actions of others and the benefits of those actions (Peng & Schoech, 2008). Specifically, Bandura identified four elemental requirements of observational learning: (1) attention, focused on paying attention to the subject matter or assignment; (2) retention, recalling the information for later use often by means of images and dialect; (3) reproduction, converting the images and dialect back into an action, and (4) motivation, reinforcing the behavior through incentives, consequences, and repeat exposure (Ganis, 2009). The elements of observational learning, when applied to this study, will help to advance insight into the learning processes of in-school suspension students as it relates to the effects of the intervention being evaluated.

Bandura identified three models of observational learning: live, verbal instructional, and symbolic. In a high school, an example of the live model would involve a person (peers, teachers, and coaches) demonstrating or acting out a behavior (Miller, 2011). The verbal instructional model would include descriptions or explanations of a behavior delivered by a teacher. The symbolic model would comprise real or fictional characters modeling behaviors in books, movies, or online media (Cherry, 2010). Miller (2011) discussed how observational learning occurs by "acquiring information from other people, books, and electronic media," and that it can be used as a therapy for problem behaviors (p. 235-239). Using the concept of
observational learning as a lens through which to examine the effects of a computer-based behavioral intervention curriculum, which combines the use of all three models of observational learning, will help to further an understanding of the ways in which these standards may be able to help students alter poor behaviors and replace those behaviors with appropriate ones.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy, another element of social learning theory, has been defined by Bandura (as cited in Miller, 2011) as “people’s perception of their competence in dealing with their environment and exercising influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 243). To the extent that students’ self-efficacy affects their academics and social behaviors, social learning theory will guide an understanding of how students exhibiting low self-efficacy may attribute failure in these specific areas to low ability and consequently be discouraged from trying to excel in future attempts (Miller, 2011). In contrast, according to the tenets of social learning theory, individual student perceptions may be altered through the vicarious experience of watching others fail or succeed on comparable tasks (Miller, 2011). Through behavior training and teacher guidance, whereby educators are provided with a theoretical understanding of the applicability of supporting student behavior progress in a positive manner using computer-based instruction and focusing on the positive aspects of student performance, student self-efficacy may be improved.

Moreover, the efficiency in acquiring many observations of behavior can be used effectively by in-school suspension educators at the secondary level when managing a large number of students with similar behavior faults (Miller, 2011). This applies directly to the current study because the goal, in part, of the in-school suspension educator is to observe the behaviors of at-risk students and provide individualized behavior intervention strategies for students to apply once the student returns to the regular classroom environment. By giving consideration to Bandura’s social learning theory and its range of elements identified above, an
essential lens through which a better understanding of the behavior of at-risk secondary students can be gained and will assist in elucidating whether or not the use of a social learning software program will be a successful way of providing targeted behavioral remediation to students in an in-school suspension environment.

Lastly, the focus groups conducted in the second phase of this study were structured in a way that would allow students’, teachers’, and administration to provide their own perspectives on the social learning-based curriculum and whether or not they believed the intervention had or did not have an impact on their behaviors. This theoretical framework provided the researcher with a guide to understanding the effectiveness of observational learning as it relates to using a computer-based intervention. Explicitly, this framework provided a way to understand whether, through observational learning, the students focused their attention on the intervention enough to retain and reproduce the behavioral strategies learned by applying these when presented with future events. Finally, through the group sessions, the researcher may come to a better understanding of how to increase the self-efficacy of students who have repeated occurrences of in-school suspension despite receiving the intervention which could provide educators with additional ideas for promoting an increase in the future successes of these students.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter presents literature based on previous research surrounding the problem of practice. Specifically, and in order to address high school in-school suspension programs that lack a research-based behavioral intervention component, this review was designed to accomplish the following objectives: (a) briefly explore the history of and current in-school suspension practices, including the specific components that make these programs successful; (b) outline the purpose and processes of Response to Intervention behavioral components and how
these systems are currently being implemented at the secondary level; and (c) investigate the use of individualized computer-based behavioral interventions and assess the results being achieved with high school students. Throughout this review, previous studies are discussed in order to establish an understanding of what is already known about the problem, to include gaps in the existing literature and suggestions for additional research.

**In-School Suspension**

During the 1960s, out-of-school suspensions were perceived as a useful way of managing troublesome students and also for assuring the intended function of the learning environment (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). However, subsequent studies questioning this exclusionary approach found out-of-school suspensions to be detrimental to academic and social progress (Patterson, 1985; Rudolph, 1984; Hochman & Worner, 1987). Despite these weaknesses, out-of-school suspension continues to be used today and is an almost unavoidable consequence when managing student behavioral incidences of violence or aggression that put the school or community at risk (Adams, 2000; Morris & Howard, 2003). While this practice is widely accepted for the most serious offenses, school leaders grapple with the removal of students who engage in minor behavioral offenses such as verbal disrespect, refusal to follow rules, and use of profanity. Consequently, a focus on keeping students in school and improving academic and social behaviors pushed school leaders toward alternatives measures to attend to the behaviors of students that do not warrant a complete removal from the school environment (Allman & Slate, 2011).

Thus, in-school suspension programs began surfacing in the 1970s in response to promoting reduction in the use of exclusionary behavioral consequences such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (Neill, 1976). Early 1970s research demonstrated the most important
purposes of in-school suspension to be educating the student and identifying the core problem of disciplinary offenses (Harvey & Moosha, 1977; Mizell, 1978). One of the earliest studies on in-school suspension programs was published by O'Brien (1976) and focused on a Minneapolis school district that implemented an in-school suspension model described as "three-fourths education and one-fourth punishment" (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 156). Subsequent research by Short (1988) identified the main goal of in-school suspension programs to be "excluding the problem student from the regular classroom while continuing to provide some type of educational experience" (p. 9).

Moving forward, studies show that the primary purpose of in-school suspension programs have not changed since its inception four decades ago. Specifically, Dickinson and Miller (2006) indicated the accepted purpose of in-school suspension to be removing "disruptive students from the classroom, thus giving these students the benefit of remaining in school where they can continue to work on assignments" (p. 72). Furthermore, in a study as recent at 2011, Simonsen et al., similarly found the objective of alternative settings such as in-school suspension to be meeting the educational needs of students and improving the behaviors of students so that students are able to benefit from a normal classroom setting. The next section elaborates further on the purposes of in-school suspension and why schools view these programs as positive alternatives to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.

Using in-school suspension as an alternative to exclusionary practices. In an effort to improve student success by keeping students in school, high school education leaders today are increasingly using in-school suspension programs as a positive alternative to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (Allman & Slate, 2011). The function of in-school suspension allows educators to remove problematic students from the classroom by placing them in a self-
contained, alternative location within the school (Morris & Howard, 2003). For attendance purposes, the student receiving in-school suspension is not considered absent from school which helps to improve school attendance rates by lowering out-of-school suspension occurrences (Simonsen et al., 2011). Academically, in-school suspension allows the student the opportunity to receive credit for class work and tests completed as assigned by their classroom teachers which would typically not be possible when a student behavioral offense results in out-of-school suspension. Because students are actually on campus during school hours, teachers are provided with a way to communicate with students and administrators are able to communicate important announcements that students would otherwise miss if assigned to out-of-school suspension. In-school suspension also keeps students from having to forfeit participation in extra-curricular activities sustaining a consistent connection between the student and school environment (Burns, 2007). To conclude, in-school suspension is just as helpful to families because it assures working parents that their child is at school and not left unattended in the home or free to roam the neighborhoods or streets of the community (Morris & Howard, 2003).

**Using in-school suspension with students with disabilities.** Another appealing factor of in-school suspension is its allowable and unlimited use as a behavior consequence for students classified as exceptional under the IDEA (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). Specifically, the IDEA restricts the number of days to ten per school year that a student classified as exceptional can be suspended outside of school, and courts have ruled that in-school suspension is not considered a change of placement for these students since the students are only being removed from the classroom temporarily and are not being removed from the school for an extended period of time (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Troyan, 2003). As a result, school leaders are able to use in-school suspension to remove exceptionally classified students from the classroom while at the same
time maintain compliance with the IDEA by keeping the number of out-of-school suspension days for behaviorally deficient exceptional education students within the required ten-day limit (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Troyan, 2003). This is noteworthy because it provides high school leaders with a disciplinary consequence that can be applied to all students equally.

Inclusively, the literature largely supports the use of in-school suspension as an alternative to the out-of-school suspension of secondary students by favoring these programs as a positive behavioral consequence for students, teachers, administrators, and parents alike. Moreover, the studies examined for this literature review clearly substantiate the idea that thriving in-school suspension programs benefit students by improving attendance, academics, self-esteem, self-discipline, relations with school personnel, and participation in extra-curricular activities, all necessary factors in the success of high school students (Cameron, 2006; Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2010). Coinciding with support encouraging the use of in-school suspension, the researcher uncovered many essential elements that must be implemented in order to achieve results like those detailed above. The next section provides an overview of those elements.

**Components of successful in-school suspension programs.** While there are many positives that can result from the use of in-school suspension as an alternative to exclusionary practices, a review of the literature also identified structural components necessary to achieving a thriving in-school suspension program. Specifically, an earlier study conducted by Short (1988) identified these components to be: (a) student isolation free from interaction with other in-school suspension students or with students in the school; (b) an isolated lunch period; (c) a three to five day average visit to in-school suspension; (d) restricted privileges; and (e) a system where classroom teachers provide students with class work for completion during their in-school
suspension visit. Another study by Sheets (1996) indicated that effective programs should also include a mission statement, clear policies, and an instructor who has experience in teaching special education. A study by Morris & Howard (2003) examined in this review also showed that successful in-school suspension programs use most or all of these structural characteristics.

In addition to the components discussed above, scholarly research of this topic also revealed that successful in-school suspension programs should be used as a tool to teach appropriate replacement behaviors instead of only being used as an isolated setting for students who have been removed from the classroom (Michail, 2011; Morris & Howard, 2003). Specific research by Mizell (1978) addressed this by revealing that, in order to actually improve student behavior through in-school suspension, the program must be designed to (1) help students develop self-discipline, (2) provide students with a way to gain knowledge about the factors contributing to the discipline-related problems, and (3) and teach preventive measures to assist students in reducing the behavior problems. Mizell (1978) claimed school disciplinary practices to be less effective when designed as “an expedient response to real or perceived student misbehavior rather than as an effort to identify and remedy the cause(s) of the behavior” (p. 11). In other words, assigning students to an in-school suspension program without a behavioral intervention component is not going to be as beneficial to students as would be a program that includes a behavior modification component.

A study of one in-school suspension program that included a group counseling component focused on self-direction, purpose, and meaning in life, provides support to Mizell's assertion by demonstrating that students in the control group who did not receive the counseling component integrated into the in-school suspension program were 15 times more likely to receive an office disciplinary referral and 13 times more likely to have a repeated visit to in-
school suspension (Hochman & Worner, 1987). Furthermore, students in the experimental group who received the counseling intervention showed improved attendance, stabilized grade point averages, and decreased tardiness (Hochman & Worner, 1987). This study provides support for the need of behavioral intervention components in addition to the in-school suspension program design elements mentioned earlier by Short and Sheets. Finally, the literature revealed further support for the delivery of behavioral intervention curriculum to risk students through the use of early intervening services. These services are explained in the next section.

**The Individuals with Disabilities Act and Response to Intervention**

In 2004, changes mandated by the IDEA began pushing public school leaders toward the use of early intervening services to identify academically or behaviorally at-risk students being taught in regular education classrooms. To support this endeavor, Response to Intervention (RtI) was introduced as a way to help move schools toward compliance with this directive (King, Lemons, & Hill, 2012). The National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) defines RtI to be the integration of:

- assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems; with RtI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities. (p. 2)

Aside from being used as a tool to provide supports to struggling students, RtI is discussed in the literature as being a multi-tiered instructional framework recommended by the IDEA as an alternate way of identifying students with disabilities (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton,
However, it is important to also note that despite being a tool used to assist in the identification of students for special education services, this is not the main objective of RtI. Ultimately, the goal of RtI is to assure that all students are achieving at a proficient level by concentrating on prevention and intervention of both academic and behavioral deficiencies by addressing the specific needs of students as soon as those needs become evident (Gresham, 2005; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002; IDEA, 2004).

**Common characteristics of RtI models.** To further examine the constructs of RtI, a number of studies analyzed for this literature review revealed a commonality in the fundamental characteristics of the tiered RtI models currently being implemented in various levels of public school systems (Fuchs et al., 2012; Keller-Margulis; 2012; Utley & Obiakor, 2012). First, research-based instructional practices are provided to all, both exceptional education and regular education, students in mainstreamed educational settings. This foundational aspect of RtI is referred to as Tier I, which is implemented by the teacher at the classroom level using core curriculum lessons to address academic areas and positive behavioral support strategies to manage student behavior (King et al., 2012). Research suggests a specific component in the delivery of academic curriculum at this tier to include differentiated instructional lessons designed to meet the needs of all learners (The National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). Furthermore, the literature discusses positive behavioral support strategies at Tier I to be comprised of a combination of classroom expectations, consequences for not meeting those expectations, and reward incentives for students meeting those expectations (Keller-Margulis; 2012; Utley & Obiakor, 2012). Classroom teachers who deliver core curriculum lessons and behavioral strategies with fidelity are then able to assess student progress to determine students’ level of concepts and skills acquisition. The data from assessments and behaviors exhibited by
students is then used to determine if a referral to the next tier is needed in order to provide subsequent academic or behavioral interventions (or both). Overall, this foundational process provides classroom teachers with a way of promptly identifying students needing more intensive support than what is being provided in the traditional classroom environment.

In the next phase of RtI, students displaying evidence of continuous academic or behavioral deficiencies despite the universal Tier I efforts are referred to Tier II for additional supports (King et al., 2012; Duffy, 2007). Tier II is comprised of academic or behavior intervention plans consisting of targeted research-based small group or individualized interventions implemented at a higher rate of frequency by classroom teachers, support facilitators, and various other specialized school personnel. Decisions on specific interventions students will receive, how and at what frequency students will receive interventions, how student progress will be monitored, and the criteria for determining whether or not improvement has been made, is determined by school academic or behavioral teams at this level (Oakes, et al., 2012). Furthermore, the literature particularly communicates the necessity of selecting evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions for students at the Tier II level consisting of results that have been corroborated through research studies involving subjects of similar attributes (Gresham, Hunter, Corwin, & Fischer, 2013; Chambless et al., 1998).

Once a Tier II academic or behavioral intervention plan has been put into place, the next characteristic of the RtI model is to continuously monitor the progress of those students receiving the Tier II supports to determine student response to the intensive interventions being applied (Fuchs et al., 2012; Keller-Margulis; 2012). If students are progressing in a positive direction, Tier II supports may be scaled back to allow for the student to continue receiving universal supports at the Tier I level through the regular classroom environment; if there is evidence that
students are still struggling, Tier II supports may be altered to include supplemental
interventions. Lastly, if students do not respond to Tier II supports, Tier III supports comprised
of intensive individualized research-based interventions provided at a higher rate over a longer
duration of time by instructional coaches, school psychologists, and other qualified school
personnel would then be implemented and monitored in the same manner as the Tier II supports
(Muoneke & Shankland, 2009). Specifically, and if implemented using the characteristics listed
above, RtI systems serve to provide educators with a way to identify student academic and
behavioral deficiencies early on, implement research-based strategies to increase student success
in those areas, and evaluate the effects of those strategies on student performance (Dickinson &
Miller, 2006; Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Goodman, Duffy, & Brady, 2010).

A recent report confirms that over 43 states have already implemented RtI programs into
their school systems (Spectrum K12, 2010), but it is important to also note that the
characteristics of RtI models look different at each school level (elementary and secondary)
depending on the availability of resources within the school. Since the reauthorization of IDEA
and introduction of RtI in 2004, there has been substantial research that discusses the
implementation of RtI at the elementary school level, and these studies do show the effectiveness
of using RtI in increasing the academic and behavioral supports for students (Fuchs, Fuchs, &
Stecker, 2010; Fuchs et al., 2012; Keller-Margulis, 2012; Burns, Appleton, & Stehouwer, 2005).
However, literature concerning RtI models at the high school level is limited, and the research
examined for this review suggests the lack of resource availability in high schools to be the key
reason that studies depicting the successes of RtI models at this level are inadequate in number
(Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010; King et al.; National Center on Response to Intervention,
Response to Intervention in high schools. The National High School Center (NHSC), National Center on Response to Intervention, and Center on Instruction (2010) together reported that RtI does have the capability of increasing student achievement at the high school level; however, this report also detailed factors that intensify the difficulty of RtI implementation for education leaders. In particular, secondary education leaders have reported that strict guidelines due to the blocked or traditional scheduling of classes and graduation credit requirements in high schools restrict the amount of individualized academic and behavioral remediation provided to students who are identified as at-risk and move beyond the Tier I level and into Tier II (NHSC et al., 2010; King et al., 2012).

Additionally, limited funding contributes to several areas of difficulty (NHSC et al., 2010; King et al., 2012). First, because of the large number of students and faculty and a gross lack of teacher planning time, funding to hire qualified staff fully designated to overseeing the fidelity of implementation of RtI models is required (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Keller-Margulis, 2012; King et al., 2012). Resources are also needed to purchase research-based academic and behavioral instructional interventions that can be used with all students at all tiered levels. Another downfall to the success of RtI models in high schools is funding shortages that inhibit school leaders from providing adequate professional development to faculty on the implementation of research-based instructional strategies and the data collection and monitoring methods that are characteristic of RtI success (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Keller-Margulis, 2012; King et al., 2012; Muoneke & Shankland, 2009; Duffy, 2007).
Lastly, emerging studies show that schools failing to achieve success with RtI models are not receiving top down funding support from state and district leaders (Keller-Margulis, 2012; Muoneke & Shankland, 2009). Even though states are not required to use RtI models, the IDEA does provide encouragement to districts by allowing up to 15% of Part B federal funds to be used for early intervening services that are made available through general education classrooms and school-wide programs for students ages 3-21 who have not been classified as special education students but who need supplementary academic and behavioral support to thrive in a general education environment (King et al., 2012; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Clark, Stephan, Lever, & Weist, 2006). Furthermore, if disproportionality based on race and ethnicity exists in the identification of students with disabilities, placement in particular education settings of such students, and the occurrence, duration, and category of disciplinary action, including suspensions and expulsions, then school districts are mandated by the state to use this money for early intervening services (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; Clark et al., 2006). Thus, the funding shortages being reported by high school leaders is especially disconcerting considering that financial deficits could potentially be alleviated if state and district leaders were using funds allocated by the IDEA specifically for the development and implementation of these early intervening services in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010).

In spite of the difficulties reported, Fisher and Frey (2011) presented RtI successes in a recent case study focusing on the implementation of RtI in a high school, its effects on student achievement, and the organization and delivery of interventions to students. The researchers in this study found that student achievement amplified during the two-year study compared with prior years surpassing similar schools in the state by 11% as evidenced by statistically significant
increases in grade point averages and student attendance (Fisher & Frey, 2011). In addition, school leaders saw a 14% decrease in students being referred for special education testing. The researchers in the Fisher and Frey (2011) study also identified several key aspects critical to the success of RtI at the site school.

First, it was found that the implementation of RtI must be a universal effort involving the entire school. Secondly, the researchers concluded that educators must use student assessments in ways that provide appropriate data to construct meaningful interventions for students. Next, it was identified that school leaders must assign qualified personnel to coordinate and oversee the RtI program and intervention efforts. Lastly, this study exposed that the scheduling of evidenced-based supplemental instruction at the Tier II level, in addition to core instruction in the classroom, is critical to student success. Ultimately, this study revealed that RtI can be a successful intervention system at the high school level assuming that components imperative to sustainability are being implemented with fidelity (Fisher & Frey, 2011). In order for the researcher in this study to determine whether RtI could be beneficial to an in-school suspension program, further review was needed. The next section discusses current literature surrounding RtI and behavioral components.

**Response to Intervention-Behavior.** Because student behavioral deficiencies have been directly linked to academic failure resulting in high school dropout (Gilbert et al., 2010; Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009; Michail, 2011; Walker, 2010), a review of literature revealed that secondary education leaders across the country are increasingly integrating RtI models that include behavioral elements, referred to in the literature as RtI-B, in an attempt to address the problem behaviors of students (Muoneke & Shankland, 2009; Walker, 2010). Studies show that schools successfully implementing RtI-B programs aimed at identifying students displaying at-
risk behavior are able to focus more intently on behavior problems early on which ultimately provide teachers, students, and administrators with more time to concentrate on overall student academic success (Walker, 2010; Hazelkorn et al., 2010). Specifically, high schools with RtI-B programs are reporting decreases in student dropouts, lower office disciplinary referrals, and less student referrals into exceptional education programs (Muoneke & Shankland, 2009; Burns, 2008; Duffy, 2007). Ultimately, research shows that by using RtI-B models equipped with research-based strategies at each tiered level, repeat offender students become more visible, and teachers and school leaders are able to provide more intensive supports to help improve student behavioral and academic performance.

The literature discusses RtI-B at Tiers I and III, but there is less available on Tier II supports. Tier I behavioral support is typically evidenced by the use of positive behavioral support (PBS) programs implementing school-wide behavioral expectations that are then applied by faculty and staff into all classrooms and areas of the school using classroom expectations, consequences, and incentives that align with the school-wide goals (Walker, 2010). A meta-analysis of thirty-one studies carried out between 1981 and 2007, by January, Casey, and Paulson (2011), on Tier I classroom-wide social skills implementation revealed a small number of studies at the high school level and the results of those interventions were only minimally effective. This analysis did reveal that social skills interventions are more effective during developmental transitional periods in students' lives, and "time frame of intervention" and "the method and intensity of instruction" also weigh on effectiveness (January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011, p. 252). In other words, more positive change was seen with students transitioning into adolescence who participated in hands-on role playing-type interventions for extended periods of time. This study also noted that few of the programs analyzed recruited the involvement of
parents in the intervention program activities; the authors went on to suggest that effectiveness of these programs would likely increase with more parental support (January et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the studies on RtI Tier II/III supports focused on behavioral interventions aimed at identifying the purposes of specific behaviors and provided a basis for more individualized support of at-risk students once they have moved past Tier I (Michail, 2011; Mitchell, Stormont, & Gage, 2011). A meta-analysis of 108 studies examined the use of cognitively-based programs, to include behavioral strategies, social skills training, and counseling programs, with students who were pulled out of the classroom and provided either group or individualized interventions and showed individualized programs that were implemented with a higher fidelity and for a longer period of time to be more effective with the at-risk population by reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviors by 33% (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Furthermore, students who were exposed to the intervention for a limited time period resulted in slight change or no improvement at all. Wilson and Lipsey (2007) also reported ease and fidelity of implementation to be key factors in assuring that progress is made when using programs such as this.

**Barriers to implementation.** Although the literature supports the effectiveness of tiered interventions across all levels, there is a steep cost factor for schools in the implementation of these research-based interventions. For example, Utley and Obiakor (2012) emphasized the need for additional research into Tier II interventions that can be administered without difficulty to targeted groups of high school students in a cost-effective manner. While one recent study by Gresham et al. (2013) discussed importance at the Tier II level of behavioral support to be that of providing intensive social skills training to at-risk students, this review of literature revealed less
on the specific types of social skills training and methods that education leaders can use to integrate this behavioral support effectively and efficiently into their schools.

Reports by the U.S. Department of Education (2007) and National Center on Response to Intervention (2010) focused on the difficulties of providing Tier II behavioral interventions at the high school level and reported the lack of funding to hire additional staffing, purchase evidenced-based interventions, and provide continued professional development to staff as deterrents to program success. Lastly, Chambers (2008) addressed funding by suggesting that schools use RtI behavioral systems with students participating in exceptional education and regular education programs as this would provide a way for educators to share resources and progress monitoring in an economic era plagued with funding deficits. The literature suggests this may be the answer to making sure that every student has the potential to benefit from targeted interventions and progress monitoring.

Overall, this review revealed specific gaps in the literature with respect to Tier II behavioral intervention strategies for students at the high school level thus provoking a need for further exploration of interventions that give school leaders more options of providing support to behaviorally at-risk students (Magg, 2012; Burns, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011). The current study is of particular importance to the field in that it supplements this weakness in the literature by presenting an RtI-B Tier II computer-based social skills intervention solution that will assist school leaders in circumventing the budgeting and scheduling constraints previously discussed as a hindrance to successful implementation of RtI systems at the high school level. Furthermore, by evaluating the effectiveness of this intervention on the recidivism rates of in-school suspension students, the current study may provide researchers with the empirical evidence on which to determine if combining RtI behavioral supports with existing in-school suspension
programs is an efficacious method in which to remediate the behaviors of at-risk students. The final section in this chapter discusses the use of computer-based instruction as a tool for remediating student behavior and what current research studies report about its effectiveness.

**Computer-Based Behavioral Instruction**

A study by Smith and Okolo (2010) showed that technology-based learning has the potential to meet the behavioral learning requirements of students by providing educators with a way of designing learning environments that are tailored to individual student needs (Okolo & Bouck, 2007). Other studies support the use of RtI models that use technology-based strategies to target content area instruction and show that the use of technology provides “more accessible, meaningful, and engaging learning environments for all students, especially those with diverse learning needs” (Basham, Israel, Graden, Poth, & Winston, 2010, p. 244; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Smith and Okolo's (2010) study also found that using technology in instruction is more successful in remediating skills that have previously been taught, which is the intended goal of a successfully designed in-school suspension program being used as a Tier II intervention to reinforce appropriate behavior of at-risk students.

In other words, because behavioral expectations are taught to all students in all classrooms at the Tier I level, technology-based interventions that re-teach those same expectations can then be used more vigorously with students who have not been doing well with those skills at the Tier I level (Basham et al., 2010). Further support of this was found by Gresham, Cook, Crews, and Kern (2004) through a meta-analysis of social skills research wherein it was reported that students exhibiting behavioral disorders, who then received technology-based social skills interventions, showed a 64% improvement when compared to students who did not receive the intervention. Ultimately, this literature supports the practice of
combining the use of technology-based social skills curriculum to support at-risk students identified through the RtI-B process as needing Tier II behavioral remediation.

Studies also revealed technology to be the preferred method of learning by today’s student and that, if given the choice, students are more likely to choose technology-based methods of learning (Smith & Okolo, 2010; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Lenhart, Madden, MacGill, & Smith, 2007). Providing further support for computer-assisted learning, a systematic review by Fox (2009) of studies that examined the impact of interactive, computer-based patient education programs demonstrated that interactive computer-based education programs have the capability of increasing learner interest in the topic being taught as well as aiding with the recall of information (Fox, 2009). Despite these findings, Smith and Okolo’s (2010) study also revealed that technology-based learning tools are not being used as prevalently in today’s schools as they could be. Smith and Okolo (2010) reported the contributing factors of this to be funding shortages; however, a further review of literature suggests the cost of computer-assisted learning to be a worthy investment that extends well beyond student learning gains.

To illustrate, a study by Marino and Beecher (2010) specifically discussed the cost-effective use of technology to improve RtI in secondary schools. These researchers reported cost-effective computer-based game tutorials in science classes to be successful in providing individualized interventions to at-risk students classified with learning disabilities. Fox (2009) also found that technology-based learning decreased the need for staff-based instruction, and when associated with the school environment, this could provide students with additional instructional time throughout the day. Smith and Okolo (2010) also reported that many software-based learning programs saved educators time by providing a computerized assessment
and progress monitoring component, which served as an efficient way of analyzing student progress as the student proceeds throughout the tiered RtI process.

**Ripple Effects® for Teens.** As this literature relates to the current study, the total cost for a thirty-computer license of the Ripple Effects® for Teens, complete with software user manuals and access to technical support by telephone or email, was $5,000.00. In addition to the purchase of the software, the site school created a classroom lab using thirty student computers that were already in the school's possession. The in-school suspension coordinator purchased headphones for each computer station with funding received from a $500.00 grant. The Ripple Effects® for Teens software package is comprised of all of the cost-effective elements discussed in the previous section, including a user-friendly computer-based teacher monitoring and assessment tool. Additionally, Ripple Effects® for Teens uses a learning design that is student-centered with a low level of teacher involvement in the student-directed tutorial-based activities. Because of these components, the one-time cost of this software and subsequent classroom computer lab set up was a justifiable expense by the in-school suspension coordinator and education leaders at the site school. The remainder of this section provides an overview of what a review of the literature revealed of the effects of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention as it relates to implementation with at-risk high school students.

**Prior studies using Ripple Effects® for Teens.** Three unpublished studies were found focusing on the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software used specifically with at-risk high school students. The first study measured the efficacy of Ripple Effects® for Teens in strengthening student assertiveness after implementation of the intervention during a single class period (Ray, 1999). The results showed an increase in assertiveness and a decrease in aggressiveness of participants (Ray, 1999). The next study evaluated the impact of the
intervention on student depression when implemented over a twelve-week period (Koffman, Albarran, & Vasquez, 2008). The findings in this study reported decreases in depression and out-of-school suspensions, and increases in attendance and reading/math test scores of student participants (Koffman, Albarran, & Vasquez, 2008). The last study, spanning the years of 2003-2008, focused on the effects of the intervention on student self-efficacy, school achievement, and substance abuse. The intervention was implemented through computer and English classes two to three times a week for a period of six weeks and reported a 22% decrease in office disciplinary referrals of participants (Bass, Perry, Ray, & Berg, 2008).

Perhaps most interesting to the researcher in the current study, was a fourth study conducted by the Ripple Effects® for Teens developers that used the intervention in various disciplinary settings with a combination of forty different elementary, middle, and high schools over a period of two years (Ray, Patterson, & Berg, 2008). The results reported a decrease in the number of referrals to in-school suspension and student office disciplinary referrals, with the most significant changes being detected among the high school student participants (Ray et al., 2008). However, because the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention was one of five different intervention systems used in this initiative, it cannot be said that the results were directly related to the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention alone. Additionally, the researchers in this study were unable to interpret the extent of the effects of the intervention on in-school suspension recidivism rates and student office disciplinary referrals because of a lack of comparable data (Ray et al., 2008).

Implications for Further Research

Overall, this review of literature supports the use of in-school suspension as an acceptable consequence for minor behavioral offenses committed by high school students making up all
populations. However, a critical factor in the success of in-school suspension is based largely on it being equipped with curriculum that focuses on the teaching and re-teaching of appropriate replacement behaviors, but the studies reviewed lacked specific curriculum recommendations. While studies showed that early intervening systems infused with a research-based behavioral component could very well be the solution for improvement of in-school suspension programs, a detrimental lack of resources at school levels appears to be hampering the integration of these systems in high schools.

Furthermore, this review uncovered that most of the unpublished studies using the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum were conducted by the creators of the software leading the researcher in this study to question whether or not there was bias in the reporting of results. Additionally, these studies span a period of nine years with the most recent occurring over five years ago. Overall, the results of the Ripple Effects® for Teens literature review supports the need for further evaluation of the effects as implemented as a single intervention in a high school in-school suspension setting. Moreover, using baseline data so that accurate comparisons can be made to the recidivism rates of students before and after receiving the intervention will strengthen the results by contributing more reliable and relevant data to the field.

Based on this extensive review, the direction for further research seems to be the evaluation of research-based behavioral interventions that can be individualized to student needs while simultaneously providing school leaders with cost-effective and efficient implementation constructs within high school disciplinary settings. It is attributable to a discovery and understanding of these precise complexities that the current study was designed and effectuated.
Chapter III: Methods

This chapter will present the research questions used to guide all phases of this study, in addition to the research methods developed and applied. The purpose of this two-phase study was to determine the effectiveness of Ripple Effects® for Teens, a social learning computer-based behavioral intervention curriculum, on the behavior of at-risk students attending in-school suspension and to better understand student, faculty, and administrative perspective on student behavior change. This section provides an explanation of the research techniques selected, a description of the site and participants, an overview of the study design, and a comprehensive explanation of the techniques used for data collection and analysis. This chapter closes with a summary of steps taken by the researcher to alleviate potential limitations and to ensure validity, credibility, and observance to ethical standards before the execution of the research protocol.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences?

2. To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students?

3. What are the students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program in improving the overall behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school?
Research Techniques

**Mixed-methods research design.** To address the research questions in this study, a mixed-methods design combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses methods were used. The use of mixed-methods research design dates back to the 1950s and consists of using different research methods or types of data to study the same research question (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Quantitative methods draw on the collection of numerical data using statistical analysis in reporting, and qualitative methods applies the collection of comprehensive information often obtained in descriptive form through communication with the research participants (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

By combining a mixed-methods real-world approach to this study, the researcher was provided with the best means of following behavior trends by showing the relationships between and among in-school suspension students receiving the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention and repeat occurrences of problem behaviors post-intervention, while at the same time allowing the researcher to determine whether or not the quantitative findings lined up with what participants themselves had to say about the intervention program and what they believe to be its effects on student behavior (Bermudez, 2010a). Social learning theory frames the understanding of the results by providing a lens through which to view student behavioral changes that occur as a result of a social learning-based intervention. More specifically, the quantitative phase of this study guided the researcher in determining if the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention had an overall effect on the behavior of in-school suspension students, which is the intended goal of the intervention (Paulsen & Dailey, 2002; Bermudez, 2010b).

**Focus groups.** Because purely quantitative studies can miss subjective elements provided by participants, a qualitative approach was also needed to aid the researcher in
evaluating administrative, faculty, and student perceptions of the curriculum through focus group sessions. In particular, qualitative data in the form of focus groups with student, faculty, and administrative participants provided the researcher with participant perspectives that offered a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the intervention was effective or not, as perceived by them. Edmunds (1999) indicated that focus group research is best applied to studies that are attempting to evaluate a new program through the eyes of the target user who is viewing the concept directly, which is an ideal fit for this study. Through qualitative data collection in the form of focus groups, the researcher was able to consider the participants’ perspectives by assessing how the participants in this study evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and how their understanding of the curriculum influences students’ behavior post-intervention (Maxwell, 2005). Additionally, this phase of the study provided the researcher with a way to assess the effects of an intervention program that uses the components of observational learning delivered through computer-based curriculum as well as any changes to student self-efficacy as reported by the students themselves.

**Outcome evaluation approach.** Outcome evaluation is a technique that allows the researcher to investigate whether changes occur for participants of a program and if these changes are associated with the program being implemented (Allen & Bronte-Tinkew, 2008). An outcome evaluation approach to this study allowed the researcher to quantitatively measure the impact that the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention has on the behavior of in-school suspension students. Additionally, this design provided the researcher with a way of qualitatively assessing the participants' perception of the intervention. Outcome evaluation is valuable in educational settings because it allows education leaders to demonstrate the extent to which their programs are working and accomplishing intended objectives and having an effect
on program participants or schools in a positive manner (Allen & Bronte-Tinkew, 2008; Bell, 2008).

While outcome evaluations can help educational leaders to determine productive components of a program, this design can also work to identify problem areas that may need additional support. Furthermore, evaluation studies can save educational institutions time and money when determining which programs or interventions may or may not be successful within their respective organizations and targeted populations. Again, this is significant considering that the researcher in this study evaluated the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention during year one of implementation in the site school and wanted to make certain that the outcomes selected for the evaluation are appropriate and are directly linked to the program's activities (Allen & Bronte-Tinkew, 2008).

Precisely, the researcher in this study was able to determine if the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention had an impact on the behavior of in-school suspension students as implemented and whether or not adaptations to the program are needed in order to produce more positive results in the future. Lastly, this study provided additional meaning by learning about the experiences of faculty and administration of students who received the intervention to determine how they perceive the effects, if any, of the intervention on student behaviors in classrooms and throughout the school. The Ripple Effects® for Teens software and how it was implemented at the site school is described in the next section.

**Study Design**

When designing research, it is important to take into consideration certain factors that can shape the design of mixed-methods studies. These factors are timing, weighting, mixing, and theorizing (Creswell, 2009). Creswell explained the sequential explanatory strategy of mixed-
methods research to be characterized by two data collection phases, the later phase building on the earlier phase, “thus the two forms of data are separate but connected” (p. 211). In this study, the researcher took a sequential explanatory approach by using the qualitative data to expand upon the findings of the quantitative data (Fraenkel et al., 2012). A visual guide to the research design for this study is illustrated in Figure 1:

![Figure 1. Visual Representation of Study Design](image)

In Figure 1, the first step, “quan” is shown in lowercase letters to indicate that this portion of the study was used to establish a baseline for the three previous years of in-school suspension student recidivism rates. The two middle boxes are shown with capital “QUAN” and “QUAL” letters to emphasize the importance of the second and third steps and to show that these data collection and analyses steps are valued equally in this study. The quantitative data collection and analysis of the 2013 year of in-school suspension students receiving the intervention was used to inform the qualitative focus group stage of data collection and analysis.

Another aspect of the sequential explanatory research strategy is that it can be an especially useful technique when examining unexpected results in greater detail (Creswell, 2009). This was an appropriate technique to use in the current study considering that the Ripple
Effects program was a new intervention to the site school and the intended results of the intervention program or the desired results of the site school may not be evident at the conclusion of the quantitative data collection phase. Ultimately, an explanatory mixed-methods approach to this study provided the researcher with more in-depth insight into understanding the research problem (Creswell, 2009).

**One-group non-experimental design.** A one-group non-experimental design was chosen for this study primarily because the site school administrators and in-school suspension coordinator shared ethical concerns about withholding a potentially helpful intervention from control group participants had a randomized experimental design been selected (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Rossi et al., (2004) affirmed the importance of the researcher in choosing a design most appropriate for the setting and participants by stating that:

> The evaluator should choose the best possible design from a methodological standpoint after taking into account the potential importance of the results, the practicality and feasibility of the design, and the probability that the design chosen will produce useful and credible results. (p. 235)

The goal in the current study was to provide all students attending in-school suspension with behavioral intervention strategies that could potentially be helpful in modifying poor behavior and reducing the repeat occurrences of in-school suspension for all students; it would have been unethical in this study to deny that treatment from any student. Additionally, it would not have been practical to withhold from a control group giving consideration to the set up of the in-school suspension classroom. Because all students were assigned in-school suspension by administrative deans based on behavioral history, it would not have been feasible for the in-
school suspension coordinator to separate the students into control or treatment groups since the in-school suspension program was being used with an entire population of students.

**Site and Participants**

**Site school.** The site of this study is a lower socioeconomic high school located in the southeast region of the United States (in agreement with the confidentiality contingencies guaranteed to participants and approved by the Institutional Review Board process, the name and location of the school district will not be revealed in this study or its findings). At the time of the study, this high school had an enrollment of 1,650 students and employed 88 faculty members. This school operates, in general, under three principals, two deans, and one behavior coach who make up the administrative team for this study. Specifically, those roles and responsibilities are held by a lead principal, two assistant principals (a supervisor of facilities and a supervisor of curriculum), two deans (responsible for processing general education student disciplinary offenses), and one behavior coach (responsible for processing exceptional student education student disciplinary offenses). The researcher, to provide a more comprehensive description of the school demographics and community, would like to note that this school, while not labeled as a Title I school during the primary data collection stage of this study, has been labeled as Title I during the time period (2009-2010 school year) from which a portion of the secondary data was analyzed. The researcher makes this note for generalizability purposes for educational practitioners intending to use this intervention in future studies.

**Recruitment.** The researcher sought and was granted permission to the site school through the deputy superintendent of the school district. The researcher met with the deputy superintendent to discuss the proposed study and to answer any questions that the school district had about the study procedures and reporting process. Because exceptional student education
students were going to be participating in the intervention and be included in the study, also present during this meeting was the director of exceptional student educational services for the school district. Due to the Ripple Effects®, for Teens intervention program being previously approved as an intervention curriculum for the site school prior to this meeting, the meeting with the deputy superintendent was simply procedural in order to seek official approval of the researcher’s study at the site school. Verbal permission was granted during the meeting and was followed up by a written letter of approval (Appendix A). Subsequently, the researcher sought and received approval from the principal of the site school as evidenced by a second letter of approval (Appendix B) which specifically granted the researcher permission to use existing data in the form of student demographic data, grades, test scores, disciplinary records, and any other student records maintained by the school.

**Phase I participants.** A non-experimental design using one group was chosen for this study because random assignment was not possible due to the nature in which student participants were assigned to in-school suspension, and a comparison group was not used as all students received the prescribed behavior intervention curriculum based on the potential benefit of the curriculum and because of the ethical obligation of the researcher to “do no harm” to participants (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 205). Moreover, all students attending in-school suspension were required to participate in the intervention program being evaluated because it was previously established as an RtI Tier II behavioral intervention for the in-school suspension program at the site school. Initial assignment into in-school suspension is discussed in the next paragraph.

When a student commits a behavior offense in the classroom, many times office disciplinary referrals are written on the offending student by the classroom teacher. The office
disciplinary referrals are then sent to an administrative dean or behavior coach for processing. Based on the offense, disciplinary history of the student, and the school district adjudication guidelines for behavior, it is possible that students are then given in-school suspension as a consequence for said behavior violation. Therefore, students given in-school suspension as a behavior consequence is the criterion being used to define the target population for those who received the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention.

The students consisted of 9th through 12th graders who received in-school suspension as a consequence for behavior violations and participated in the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention while attending in-school suspension. This population included a wide range of subjects consisting of male and female participants ranging in age from 14 to 18 years; general education students and students classified as exceptional; and students of various race and economic status. Because students were assigned to in-school suspension by administrative deans or the behavior coach on a case-by-case basis, there was no way to determine in advance the exact number of participants that would be involved in this study during the primary data collection period. However, existing disciplinary data showed a total of 356 students participating in the in-school suspension program during the 2011-2012 school year which gave the researcher an estimated number of in-school suspension student participants for the 2012-2013 school year.

Ripple Effects® for Teens software. Ripple Effects® for Teens is a social learning evidence-based computer intervention using software comprised of interactive modularized learning tutorials concentrating on social-emotional training and problem-solving applications. The tutorials are organized into strengths (assets), problems (behavioral, academic, social), and reasons (risk factors at individual, family, peer, school, community, and social structure levels)
and are presented to users in a variety of over 400 reading independent topics (Ray et al., 2008). The program is user-driven and focuses on building strengths in core social-emotional abilities that are correlated with academic achievement and resilience (Ripple Effects, 2007). The tutorials are set up using interactive games and exercises that help students to understand the reasons behind their actions and to learn proven effective strategies for changing their behavior (Ripple Effects, 2007). Lastly, the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention program is meant to be implemented in a flexible manner by assigning tutorials based on user needs and allowing students to work through the tutorials without the constant direction of a facilitator (Ripple Effects, 2007).

*Intervention specific to site school.* The key predictor for this study was the research-based and district-approved Ripple Effects® for Teens behavioral intervention software program that in-school suspension students received as the prescribed intervention. The Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum is tutorial-based and categorized by specific problem behaviors. Students entering in-school suspension were assigned by the in-school suspension coordinator (a full time certified educator) to a specific In-School Suspension Lesson Plan (Appendix C), created by the in-school suspension coordinator, consisting of twenty different Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorial topics. Because there are over 400 different tutorials, the in-school suspension coordinator created this lesson plan for students by narrowing the topics down to a reasonable number to be completed by students attending in-school suspension for a period of one to five days. These tutorial topics were selected based on the highest rate of problem behaviors occurring throughout the school campus and in classrooms by using secondary data sources in the form of office disciplinary referrals processed during the previous school year. From there, 20 specific tutorial topics were selected to address the highest number of repeated incidences of
problem behaviors being displayed by students campus-wide. The tutorial topics included in the lesson plan were: learning style, temperament, giving compliments, receiving compliments, showing respect, getting respect, communication skills, boundaries, courtesy (strengths), dress code, defying authority, bullying, internet-harassment, swearing, talking back, conflict with teacher, tardy (problems), bad decisions, cultural differences, family background (reasons).

Students were provided with a 40-minute introductory orientation to the in-school suspension program and the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention by using a PowerPoint presentation (attached as Appendix D) designed and presented by the in-school suspension coordinator (the researcher received permission from Ripple Effects® for Teens to use their copyrighted images in the orientation PowerPoint, see attached as Appendix E). This orientation provided students with the expectations, consequences, incentives, and daily procedures for in-school suspension to include how the in-school suspension day would be structured. Specifically, students were instructed to work on the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention during morning hours. After returning from a scheduled mid-morning restroom break, students were given the option to continue with their Ripple Effects® for Teens lesson or to return to their assigned seat to work on class assignments that teachers had sent for students to complete while assigned to in-school suspension. The in-school suspension coordinator gave equal value and importance to completion of both the Ripple Effects® for Teens and teacher assignments.

The orientation also illustrated to students how to create a Ripple Effects® for Teens student account and how to maneuver throughout the assigned tutorials. Students were given the lesson plan (Appendix C) and were instructed to track completion of the assigned tutorials. Students who made repeated visits to in-school suspension were asked to complete the lesson plan a subsequent time; however, it is important to note that students were given permission to
explore other behavioral tutorials after completion of the twenty assigned topics. Students were instructed to return the completed lesson plan to the in-school suspension coordinator upon completing the assigned in-school suspension term. As the orientation notes, students were also provided with head phones at their computer station for listening to the interactive components (videos, testimonials, vocabulary pronunciation) of the program.

As previously mentioned, the Ripple Effects® for Teens creators suggest that the program should not be over directed by adult facilitators, as there is no right or wrong way for a student to complete particular tutorials (Ripple Effects, 2007). For this reason, the in-school suspension coordinator did not stand over the student or provide constant direction. If a student appeared to be off-task, the in-school suspension coordinator did redirect the student toward completion of the Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorials. Other than that, students were simply encouraged to take their time completing the tutorials and to follow the lesson plan as it had been designed for them. The in-school suspension coordinator in turn provided a structured and distraction-free environment for students to work, and answered student questions regarding the operation and use of the program if needed. Additionally, the in-school suspension coordinator discreetly monitored the time that students were working on the curriculum, as each tutorial is estimated to take fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Status checks were also used by the in-school suspension coordinator to give students computer breaks as needed to avoid becoming overly tired which can be a distraction from completing the assigned tutorials.

**Phase II participants.** Purposeful sampling was used to determine the participants of the focus groups. This method was chosen in order for the researcher to establish three distinct categories of participants which is typically referred to in research as segmentation. Morgan (1996) discussed how a researcher uses segmentation when wanting to understand differences
between groups as this helps to assemble a comparative element into the research design. Additionally, studies suggest that most commonly, research projects consist of four to six focus groups because data will eventually become saturated, meaning that there is only a slight chance that new information will materialize after the first few groups (Morgan, 1996; Zeller, 1993).

**Student participants.** The initial goal of the researcher was to have four student focus groups each with four to six participants who participated in Ripple Effects® for Teens during an assignment(s) to in-school suspension during the 2013 school year. Massey (2011) discussed one advantage of focus group interviewing to be that, “the resulting data offers a robust alternative to more traditional survey methods when absolute numbers of respondents are less important than is a rich investigation of content” (p. 21). The researcher's goal in this study was to use focus groups to obtain student feedback and perception on the Ripple Effects® for Teens program from those students who visited in-school suspension in order to expose themes that provided insight about what aspects of the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum, if any, had an effect on student behavior. Lastly, the goal of using only four student focus groups guaranteed the researcher that enough student participants could be obtained for participation in the interviews and would help with time constraints by allowing the researcher access to the students during the actual school year.

**Student selection.** The overall criterion for selection was students who were enrolled at the site school and had received the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention through the in-school suspension program during the primary data collection period of the 2012-2013 school year. Because students assigned to in-school suspension automatically received the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention as part of the established program, student participants consisted of those attending in-school suspension who received the intervention during the 2012-2013 school year.
However, some students attending in-school suspension did not receive the curriculum due to circumstances such as illness (checking out of school before completing the curriculum), disciplinary infractions (being removed from in-school suspension before completing the curriculum), testing (being removed from in-school suspension for state-mandated testing before completing the curriculum), or other administrative matters (being removed from in-school suspension by guidance, administrators, etc., before completing the curriculum). Using this criterion, the researcher was able to create a list of 324 students.

The researcher then met with all qualifying students on the recruitment list during school hours to provide students with an active Parental Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix F). The researcher read this form to students in order to give background information on the study and to provide an understanding of the study purpose. Even though the research study presented no more than minimal risk of harm to student participants, an active parental consent form was used in order to fully inform parents of the nature of the study and to provide a way for the researcher to document parental consent in writing. Students were instructed during this meeting to take the Parental Information Letter and Consent Form home to the parent for review, and students were asked to return the form to the researcher once the parent had granted permission for participation by signing the form. The researcher waited one week (five business days) for return of the signed consent forms after the forms had been sent home with the students. The reason for this brief waiting period was due to time constraints as end-of-course exams and summer break was quickly approaching. The researcher’s initial goal was to select as participants the first sixteen to twenty-four students to return the Parental Information Letter and Consent Form so that four student focus groups could be developed.
Ultimately, within the five day period, the researcher received fifteen signed consent forms. From here, three student focus groups consisting of five members each were formed. The researcher scheduled the focus groups during the student participants’ school lunch hour to avoid pulling students out of core curriculum classes. Because these sessions occurred during the lunch hour, lunch was provided to the students prior to beginning the discussion. The focus groups met in a conference room in an office location of the school, a quiet location where optimal audio recording was feasible. Prior to beginning the interviews, the researcher provided a detailed overview of the content and administration of the interview, the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and the role of the student participant. Additionally, the researcher discussed voluntary participation, risks and benefits, and student rights as a participant. Next, the researcher made sure that participants agreed to an audio-recording of the interview and the publishing of data with all personal information being made confidential. The Parental Information and Consent Form was used as the script for this detailed overview. Lastly, the researcher answered any questions students had and students were asked if they agreed to participate in the interview. The student focus group interview concluded the student participants’ participation in this study.

Faculty and administrative participants. At the time of the study, the site school employed eighty-eight (88) faculty members and six (6) administrators, ranging in age from 25 to 65 years, and consisting of various ethnicities. Purposeful sampling was used to determine the participants of the faculty focus groups, as the goal of the researcher was to have four faculty focus groups each with four to six participants who were employed at the site school and taught students who participated in Ripple Effects® for Teens during an assignment(s) to in-school
Faculty and administration selection. To qualify for participation in a faculty or administrative focus group interview, potential faculty and administrative participants must have been employed as teachers or administrators of students who received the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention through in-school suspension during the 2012-2013 school year. Additionally, participants had to be willing to participate in a one audio-recorded 60-minute focus group session at a time and location that ensured an open and engaging discussion. Next, participants had to agree to the recording of the interview to be used by the researcher in the reporting phase of the study. Finally, participants had to agree to the publishing of data with all personal information being made confidential.

In order to find participants who would offer quality data (Creswell, 2009), the researcher created a list of 22 qualifying faculty members who had at least one student attend in-school suspension and receive the intervention during the data collection period of the study. The qualified faculty participants were then recruited to participate through a recruitment email (Appendix G) to request voluntary participation in a focus group interview with the researcher. This email was sent by the researcher using Northeastern University email capabilities. The researcher's goal was to select the first four to six responding faculty members to make up three focus groups. Because there are only six administrative personnel employed at the site school, all six administrators (three principals and three deans) were recruited by recruitment email. The administrators who responded were selected to make up one administrative focus group.

The researcher waited one week (five business days) for potential faculty and administrative participants respond to the Recruitment Email. Twelve out of 22 faculty members
and five out of six administrative members responded and agreed to participate in a focus group interview. The researcher then contacted each potential participant in-person at the site school during school hours. At that time, there was a detailed discussion provided by the researcher to the potential participant highlighting the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and the role of the participant. The researcher also read over with the potential participant the Faculty and Administrative Informed Consent Form (Appendix H). The researcher answered any questions the potential participant had to provide clarity about voluntary participation in the focus group interview process.

The faculty and administrative participants who agreed to participate in the focus group interview process did so at a time that was most convenient for them, which was after school hours. The location of the focus group interview was a conference room located in an office area of the site school, a quiet location where optimal audio recording was feasible. A Faculty and Administrative Informed Consent Form was obtained from each faculty and administrative participant prior to their agreed upon participation in the focus group process. Faculty and administrative participants were each provided with a transcript of the focus group interview after it was transcribed for review and edits. This concluded the faculty and administrative participation in the study.

**Data Collection**

Phase one focused on the outcome of using Ripple Effects® for Teens through in-school suspension versus using no intervention at all and examined the overall effect on the recidivism rates of students receiving the intervention through in-school suspension. Additionally, socioeconomic status, academic success, and student disability classification of all in-school suspension students were analyzed to examine the association between these variables and
student recidivism rates. Phase two investigated student, faculty, and administrative perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention. The data includes one-time student visits to in-school suspension, repeat student visits to in-school suspension, and student, faculty, and administrative focus group information. The following sections will provide, in detail, specific data collection techniques used in each phase.

**Phase I.** The secondary data was recorded, in part, on daily in-school suspension attendance records. When a student is assigned to in-school suspension, the in-school suspension coordinator maintains daily attendance records in Excel format which are then saved into the in-school suspension coordinator’s computer file folder located on the school server. These files remain stored digitally until they are archived at the end of the school year by the in-school suspension coordinator. Additionally, when a student is assigned to in-school suspension, a manila file folder is created for the student by the in-school suspension coordinator. Recorded on the folder are the in-school suspension assignment dates. This is used to track when the student attends in-school suspension and how many repeat occurrences the student has had. The student folder is also used to store the intervention completion record (In-School Suspension Lesson Plan, Appendix C) completed by students. Student folders for all years included in this study are stored inside a locked storage closet located inside the in-school suspension classroom.

The student demographic (gender, race, disability status, lunch status) data is stored in a district-managed database system referred to as TERMS. Each student in the school district is assigned a student number upon enrollment with the district. All student demographic information related to this study, to include race, gender, date of birth, grade level, graduation status, disciplinary history, district school enrollment history, lunch status, and ESE
classification, is stored into TERMS under the student’s identifying number. This data remains in the TERMS database and is maintained by the district. This demographic data was retrieved on each student, stored in Excel format, and then saved into the in-school suspension coordinator’s computer file folder connected to the school server. These files will remain stored digitally until they are removed by the in-school suspension coordinator.

**Research question one.** The data collection process used to answer the first research question was completed using the in-school suspension attendance records of the 1,154 students who attended in-school suspension during the 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 school years. The daily in-school suspension attendance records discussed above were then used to create a master Excel file that included all of the student names and corresponding student numbers of in-school suspension attendees by each year.

From here, this Excel file was used in combination with the district-wide student information database titled TERMS in order to obtain the remaining information needed to complete the recidivism analyses. In particular, once the attendance data was keyed into this Excel file, the researcher then went into TERMS to authenticate that the student name matched the student number. Because the original in-school suspension attendance records were hand keyed in each school year by the in-school suspension educator assigned to this task, the researcher wanted to confirm the accuracy of the student numbers assigned to each student in order to assure that students were not being duplicated on the attendance records.

Once all errors in student names and numbers had been corrected, the researcher then used the TERMS database to confirm the disciplinary infractions resulting in an in-school suspension assignment for each student over all years. The researcher was able to accomplish this because all disciplinary infractions resulting in an Office Disciplinary Referral (ODR) and
each ODR consequence are recorded in the disciplinary panel of the TERMS database. By pulling up the disciplinary history by enrollment year (2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013) on each student, the number of visits to in-school suspension for each year was accurately confirmed. Additionally, this method allowed the researcher to determine if the student was enrolled at the site school during each of the years included in this study. If the student was not enrolled, then that particular cell in the Excel document for that year was left blank. If the student was enrolled at the site school during a specific year without attending in-school suspension during that year, then the cell was labeled with a zero.

Ultimately, it was important to the researcher to use this process to verify that every student listed on the in-school suspension attendance records did in fact receive an assignment to in-school suspension on the dates that the in-school suspension attendance records indicated for each year. This confirmation was crucial to the reliability of the data in order to assure that the recidivism rates being reported and eventually analyzed for this study were entirely accurate. While this data collection phase was an extensive process spanning a period of three months, it was a necessary one that resulted in a clean data set by allowing the researcher to correct duplications and inconsistencies in student names and student numbers as well as to accurately confirm student discipline infractions resulting in an in-school suspension assignments for all of the years included in this study.

**Research question two.** The data collection process used to answer research question number two was completed by accessing demographic data from the TERMS database on every student who attended in-school suspension over the four-year period. Specifically, once the researcher was in possession of accurate attendance records as described above, numerous data panels in TERMS were then accessed in order to obtain the race, gender, lunch status,
exceptional student education classification, grade level by specific year, and academic records for each student who attended in-school suspension over the four-year period evaluated in this study. While this, too, was a lengthy process, it was the only accurate way that the researcher could assure the complete and precise collection of demographic information for each student.

Figure 2, below, displays a brief sample of the variables as recorded by the researcher in Excel format. Column one indicates student race as marked with a "W" for white or "B" for black (additional races are represented in this study, but are not included on the sample provided in Figure 2); column two shows student gender as marked with a "M" for male or "F" for female; column three is titled "ESE" which is an abbreviation for exceptional student education as indicated with a "YES" or "NO" to identify student disability classification; and the fourth column is student lunch status as indicated by "PAID" or "FREE" to identify student socioeconomic status. The remaining columns indicate the grade level for each of the school years analyzed in this study, in addition to the corresponding number of in-school suspension visits that particular student had during that year. The researcher has intentionally omitted the columns including student names and district-issued student numbers from this record in order to maintain privacy as required by informed consent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>ESE</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Grade Level 2010</th>
<th>Grade Level 2011</th>
<th>Grade Level 2012</th>
<th>Grade Level 2013</th>
<th>ISS Visits 2010</th>
<th>ISS Visits 2011</th>
<th>ISS Visits 2012</th>
<th>ISS Visits 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>PAID</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>PAID</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>PAID</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Visual Representation of Phase One Excel Data Collection*
Phase II. The researcher used a focus group protocol using five open-ended questions (prompts were delivered as needed) that were designed to allow students to reflect on changes in the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors after receiving the intervention (see attached Student Focus Group Protocol for script and questions, Appendix I). The researcher also used this approach with faculty and administration participants to determine their perspective on the value of the intervention (see attached Faculty/Administrative Focus Group Protocol for script and questions, Appendix J). The researcher, who acted as the focus group moderator, used a Sony Digital Voice Recorder device to record the focus group sessions. Simultaneously, a Samsung Galaxy SIII Smartphone was used in order to have a back-up copy of the focus group sessions should the Sony recording be lost or damaged. The specific back-up recording application used was Droid Record PRO which is designed specifically for recording lengthy meetings and interviews.

Data Analysis

The data analyses portions of this study consisted of two main parts. In phase one, the researcher examined the baseline (2010, 2011, 2012) and intervention (2013) years of in-school suspension attendance records. Phase two included a qualitative analysis of the focus group data.

Phase I. Several methods of statistical analyses were used to analyze the student in-school suspension attendance and demographic data of students who received office disciplinary referrals that resulted in in-school suspension assignments before implementation of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program in addition to attendance rates for students during the 2013 school year. Specifically, this data included one-time in-school suspension visits and repeated occurrences of in-school suspension visits. Additionally, the researcher included socioeconomic status, and student disability classification to determine whether these variables correlated to the
number of repeat visits to in-school suspension and if there was any change in the number of repeated visits of these particular students in the year 2013. Figure 3, below, shows the research question and corresponding statistical methods used in these analyses. Additionally, the reasoning behind the selected method as it relates to this study is provided.

| Research Question 1: To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences? |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Method         | Reasoning                       |
| Fisher’s Exact Probability Test | Tests for associations between two variables; in this study, the Fisher’s Exact shows the extent to which student recidivism rates for the intervention year are different from a baseline year. |
| Mann-Whitney Test | Tests for difference in means; in this study, the Mann-Whitney shows if there are changes in the recidivism rates of repeat offender students who received the intervention more than once during 2013. |

| Research Question 2: To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students? |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Method         | Reasoning                       |
| Truncated Negative Binomial Regression | Is used to model count data for which the value zero cannot occur and when there is evidence of over dispersion; in this study, the truncated negative binomial regression will account for students who received one or more visits (zero is not observed) and shows the existence or nonexistence of the relationships between gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and disability classification of repeat offender students overall. |

Figure 3. Visual Representation of Statistical Analysis Methods for Phase One Data Analysis

**Phase II.** The researcher kept handwritten field notes during each focus group session. Because nonverbal communication, facial expressions, and behavioral reactions are not always
reflected in the recording and subsequent transcription of focus group sessions, the field notes provided the researcher with an additional source of observational information for interpretation of the participants’ responses (Stewart, Shamdasani, Rook, 2007). Throughout the process of moderating the focus group sessions and taking field notes, the researcher began to notice themes and ideas developing early on among participant responses. From here, the researcher used the recordings and field notes to transcribe verbatim each focus group session. The researcher, who had a previous nine-year career in the legal field consisting of extensive experience with transcribing legal proceedings, personally transcribed the interviews. As noted by Seidman (2006), personal transcribing encourages accuracy and provides the researcher with the opportunity to analyze the data in its entirety and not in parts. The specific procedures used to analyze the focus group transcripts are outlined in the next section.

**Coding.** Krueger and Casey (2000) recommended a thematical approach to analyzing evaluation-directed focus group data when the goal of the researcher is to become aware of the primary themes and associations that enlighten the impacts associated with a program. Because the researcher in this study sought an in-depth understanding of intervention effectiveness from the perspective of students, faculty, and administration as stakeholders in the intervention program outcomes, the data collected during the focus group sessions was analyzed thematically to include various levels of qualitative coding techniques.

Qualitative coding is the process of labeling data and then linking that data to the research questions to come to a better understanding of what is being studied (Saldana, 2013). In the data analysis phase of a research study, researchers look for patterns in data and attempt to discover ideas that can help to explain why those patterns exist (Saldana, 2013). Saldana (2013) discussed coding in mixed-methods research and asserted that researchers can use a variety of
coding techniques to obtain a more enhanced perspective on data. Thus, the researcher in this study used an iterative process, as recommended by Creswell (2009), of working with one set of field notes and transcripts at a time in order to further narrow down a commonality of concepts throughout the focus group discussions of each group (student, faculty, and administrative). The researcher accomplished this with the aid of Microsoft Word review and comment features including the application of a variety of colored highlighting tools to distinguish between each concept identified. From the color-coding, the researcher was then able to transfer the data into separate charts where it was possible to begin categorizing the responses into areas of initial, focused, and emergent concepts so that connections could then be identified within and across the separate groups and associated to the research questions attempting to be answered.

Validity and Reliability

It is possible that the student participants underwent changes in their lives, other than the in-school suspension program or the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention, which could have affected their in-school suspension recidivism rates. While life outside of high school and in-school suspension is an uncontrollable factor for the researcher, the researcher took certain steps to assure the validity and reliability of the study.

Creswell (2009) discussed one possible threat to internal validity in quantitative research as maturation. Maturation is when participants of a study mature or change during the research project which may influence the results. Fraenkel et al., (2012) indicated that maturation can be a severe threat in intervention studies using pre-post data, or in studies that extend over a number of years, such as in the current study. In response to a maturation threat, it is recommended that researchers control for maturation by selecting “participants who mature or change at the same rate” (Creswell, 2009, p. 163) which is what the researcher in this study has done by looking at
the in-school suspension attendance records of students in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve, spanning a four-year period.

Moreover, by choosing a mixed-methods design, the researcher was able to use open-ended focus group questioning to give the student participants a voice in highlighting why they believed the intervention did or did not have an effect on student behavior. This data was then analyzed rigorously using field notes, quality audio-recording, verbatim transcription, and coding processes. Because of these thorough procedures, the researcher was able to accurately compare the quantitative data from phase one to the students’ responses in their own words in phase two. This two-part design, including a quantitative data collection and analysis followed by a qualitative data collection and analysis, helps to assure the internal validity and reliability of the results obtained in this study.

Aside from the aforementioned factors, potential bias in research studies becomes a factor when the researcher has a pre-existing relationship with the study participants either as their teacher or colleague. Because the researcher in this study is also the in-school suspension coordinator at the site school, the researcher has previously established working relationships with the student participants as well as workplace relationships with the faculty and administrative participants. The researcher took these relationships into consideration when discussing the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and the role of the participant with the participants before the focus group sessions began. Because the researcher used audio recording for the focus group sessions, the reliability of the transcripts can be assured by giving the researcher a way to compare the audio recordings to the final transcripts. This assisted the researcher in maintaining truthfulness and avoiding bias in the final reporting of the data.
Lastly, there are numerous factors that prevent the researcher from generalizing the study results to programs or individuals in other settings. Specifically, the disciplinary policies and procedures in place at the site school and the in-school suspension setting at the site school, to include program design, implementation, staffing, and student population, do not allow generalizations to be made. The researcher in the proposed study would need to conduct additional research in different schools and in varied in-school suspension settings to determine if the same or similar results would occur in those new settings as found in the current study.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Creswell (2009, p. 73) stated that, throughout a research project, it is important for the researcher “to engage in ethical practices and to anticipate what ethical issues will likely arise.” A first step the researcher has taken in this proposed study is the successful completion of the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) online course entitled, “Protecting Human Research Subjects,” which was offered through the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (Certificate of Completion attached here to as Appendix K). The researcher also went through the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board application process for approval to conduct research involving children, and that approval was granted on May 6, 2013 (Notification of IRB Action attached here to as Appendix L).

The NIH considers three of the most important ethical considerations in research to be “protecting participant identity, treating participants with respect, and protecting participants from physical and psychological harm” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 565). The researcher in this study understands the importance of not putting participants of the study at risk and numerous steps were taken to assure that ethical considerations were given in this regard. The topic of confidentiality was addressed by assuring that the identity of research participants remained
undisclosed. Data was stored in a locked cabinet, and the final reporting was done in a manner that does not reveal any identifiable information of the site school or research participants. Additionally, the researcher developed an informed consent form for minor participants in the form of a Parental Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix F) to assure that parents and students were fully informed of the purpose of the study and given an opportunity to consent to their child’s participation. An Informed Consent document for faculty and administrative participants (Appendix H) was also obtained from those participants. These forms acknowledged that participants’ rights would be protected during the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases of the study. The study participants were able to freely ask questions and have those questions answered, and the researcher had “participant status checks” built into the focus group sessions to assure that participants were not experiencing physical or psychological discomforts during the discussions. Lastly, the researcher considered proper permission to access the study site and participants by taking great care in meeting with the appropriate authorities for the site district and school and received verbal and written approval from both.

**Conclusion**

Student behavioral issues are an assiduous nuisance across campuses and within teacher classrooms contributing to decreases in the academic achievement, graduation rates, and social growth of high school students. Despite efforts by federal, state, district, and school-level leaders to reduce the use of exclusionary practices with disruptive students by replacing out-of-school suspension with in-school suspension programs, inadequacies in the use of these programs still exist. The current study derived from the realization that an in-school suspension classroom alone is insufficient in reducing the repeated occurrences of poor student behavior and that these programs must incorporate a research-based behavioral intervention component to
hold true value. By examining this problem of practice through existing literature, it was discovered that there are specific challenges to implementing and sustaining in-school suspension programs with sufficient tools needed to improve the behaviors of its participants. However, further exploration of RtI-B systems, program evaluation, and participant perception unveiled a pathway for the efficient delivery of interventions that play an important role in improving the behaviors of at-risk students within an in-school suspension program. As the researcher continues with the analysis of this problem, focused and emerging concepts will concentrate on bringing a renewed purpose to in-school suspension programs and strengthening support within the classroom for teachers and students.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

Reporting of Findings and Analysis

Chapter IV presents the analyses and research findings of this study. The analyses are summarized in each section, by phase, using the research questions as a guide. The first phase of this study detailing the statistical findings is presented earliest in this chapter followed by the presentation of the second phase of this study detailing the qualitative findings. The quantitative results are specifically organized by the following research questions:

1. To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences?

2. To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students?
The research question used to guide the qualitative portion of the study is as follows:

3. What are the students’, teachers’, and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program in improving the overall behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school?

**Study Context**

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to evaluate the effects of a software-based behavioral intervention curriculum on the recidivism rates of students attending in-school suspension at a high school located in the southeastern region of the United States and to obtain student, teacher, and administrative perceptions of that intervention and its effects on student behavior. It was anticipated that the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program evaluated in this study would contribute as an acceptable research-based RtI tier II behavioral intervention that can be used with behaviorally at-risk students participating in a high school in-school suspension program. There were four core elements to the two-phase research design: (1) an analysis of in-school suspension attendance records for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012 to provide baseline data on the recidivism rates of students attending in-school suspension without a behavior intervention component; (2) implementation of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software with in-school suspension students during the 2013 school year; (3) an analysis of in-school suspension attendance for the year 2013 to provide data on the recidivism rates of students attending in-school suspension who received the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, and; (4) a focus group component consisting of three student groups, two faculty groups, and one administrative group.

The first phase of this study includes the quantitative analyses. Statistical findings detailing the recidivism rates of students over a three-year period as compared to the recidivism
rates of students during the fourth-year when the intervention curriculum was made part of the in-school suspension program, are presented first. These findings present the statistical correlation of gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students who had repeated assignments to in-school suspension. The second phase of this study presents the qualitative analysis which includes an account of student, teacher, and administrative perceptions of the intervention as collected through focus group sessions. Focus group data will be presented, as well as this researcher's analysis of the data, in order to demonstrate the extent to which students, teachers, and administrators perceive that the intervention was effective and what the relationship is between participant perception and the effects of the curriculum as presented in the first phase of data findings.

**Phase I Participant Profile**

This phase of the study looked at the first three years of in-school suspension recidivism rates as compared to the current year. This attendance data was broken down into two sets of participants totaling 830 students during the 2010, 2011, and 2012 school years (baseline years), and 356 during 2013 (intervention year). However, thirty-two students who did not receive the intervention were eliminated from the data set bringing the participant total for the 2013 school year to 324 students. The eliminated students were unable to complete the intervention despite attending in-school suspension because of being pulled out before completion for various reasons including testing, checking out of school, and supplementary disciplinary issues. Because of the thirty-two students eliminated, an overall total of 1,154 students are included in the Phase I statistical analyses completed for this study.

Student participants represented all grade levels, 9, 10, 11, and 12, and were between the ages of 15 to 18 years old. Students included in this number made up a diverse population of
ethnicities and included both male and female students of varying degrees of socioeconomic status and learning levels. Table 1 illustrates a gender and race composite profile of the in-school suspension student participants.

Table 1

| Gender/Race Composite of In-School Suspension Participants (N=1,154) |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 671 |
| Female | 483 |
| Race | Asian | 7 |
| Black | 683 |
| Hispanic | 37 |
| Indian | 4 |
| Multi | 42 |
| Pacific | 4 |
| White | 377 |

Additional descriptive characteristics of students were collected and analyzed, including grade level breakdown by year, number of student visits to in-school suspension by year, disability classification, lunch status, and class failure; these characteristics are reported in the sections to follow that are specifically related to the research questions that address same.

Research Question 1: To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences?

This question was designed to assist the researcher in determining whether or not the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program had an effect on the student behaviors that result in repeated assignments to in-school suspension. To answer this question, in-school suspension student recidivism rates for the 2013 intervention implementation year were compared by grade
level to the 2010, 2011, and 2012 baseline years at which time the in-school suspension program at the site school did not have an evidenced-based behavioral intervention curriculum as a component of in-school suspension. Because this research question is directional in nature, a one-tailed statistical analysis using the Fisher's Exact Probability Test was conducted. The Chi-Square Test was originally considered for this analysis; however, whereas Chi-Square is intrinsically non-directional, the Fisher's Exact Probability Test is capable of being applied as either a directional or non-directional test. Consequently, the researcher decided that the Fisher's Exact Probability Test would be a more rigorous test of significance for this data set.

**Results.** The Fisher’s Exact Probability Test tests for associations between two variables and was used to determine the extent to which student recidivism rates for the intervention year were different from student recidivism rates during the previous three (baseline) non-intervention years. The Mann-Whitney Test was also used as it is a non-parametric test of differences across two populations using an ordinal scale, in this case, number of repeat visits to in-school suspension. Specifically, in this study the Mann-Whitney test allowed for a test of significance for recidivism between populations in each of the non-intervention years (2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012) and the intervention year (where the Ripple Effects for Teens® program was employed once a student was referred to in-school suspension; 2012-2013).

To compare like populations but not the very same population year-to-year, the Fisher Exact Test and Mann-Whitney tests for significance were applied across each of the grades (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th) across each of the four years – the three previous non-intervention and the 2012-2013 intervention year.

Given the decision to compare each of the grade levels across the three non-intervention and single intervention year, the results of this analysis will be provided grade-by-grade.
9th grade recidivism. Table 2, below, presents the results for ninth grade in-school suspension students for all baseline years as compared to the intervention year.

Table 2

Comparison of 9th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to Year 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>97 (60%)</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48 (45%)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.019*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>88 (63%)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48 (45%)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82 (59%)</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.019*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48 (45%)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.046*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
*p < .05

This analysis revealed a statistically significant (p < .05) decrease in the 2013 recidivism rates of students in grades nine when compared to years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney results show significant (p < .05) changes in those students who received the intervention more than once because of repeated visits to in-school suspension.

Table 3, below, shows results of an analysis completed on ninth grade in-school suspension student recidivism rates as the baseline years are compared to one another.
Table 3

Comparison of 9th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to Baseline Years 2010, 2011,

2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>97 (60%)</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>88 (63%)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>97 (60%)</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82 (59%)</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>88 (63%)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>82 (59%)</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
*p < .05

It is important to note, that during the non-intervention years, no statistically significant
differences in the in-school suspension recidivism rates of students in grade nine, were found
when compared to the baseline years (p < .05). Figure 4, below, provides a visual representation
of the percentage of ninth grade in-school suspension recidivism rates spanning all four years.
*p < .05

*Figure 4.* Percent of 9th Grade In-School Suspension Recidivism Rates

Figure 4 depicts the steadiness of recidivism rates during the baseline years prior to the intervention being implemented (60%, 63%, and 59%). Upon implementation of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention into in-school suspension, however, this figure shows a significant (*p < .05*) decrease in recidivism rates for these students (45%).

**10th grade recidivism.** Table 4, presents the data and results for 10th grade in-school suspension students for the baseline years compared to 2013.
Table 4

*Comparison of 10th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43 (44%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40 (40%)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58 (52%)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.043*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40 (40%)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.040*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 (46%)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40 (40%)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney

*p < .05

This analysis revealed a statistically significant decrease in the 2013 recidivism rates of students in grades ten when compared to year of 2011, thus disclosing that the behavior intervention curriculum did have an effect on the recidivism rates of 10th grade in-school suspension students during that particular year (*p < .05*). However, no significance was found in any other comparisons of the grade 10 students, as noted below in Table 5 (*p < .05*).
Table 5

*Comparison of 10th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to Baseline Years 2010, 2011, 2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43 (45%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58 (52%)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43 (45%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 (46%)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58 (52%)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45 (46%)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
*p < .05

Figure 5, below, provides a visual representation of the percentage of 10th grade in-school suspension recidivism rates spanning all four years.
Figure 5. Percent of 10th Grade In-School Suspension Recidivism Rates

This figure provides a visual representation of the decrease between all years as compared to 2013, showing a significant reduction between 2011 and the 2013 intervention year only (*p < .05).

Table 6, below, shows the data and results for 11th grade in-school suspension students for the all years compared to 2013.
Table 6

*Comparison of 11th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47 (49%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28 (47%)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39 (42%)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28 (47%)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34 (45%)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28 (47%)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney

*p < .05

The recidivism rates of students in grade 11 showed no statistical difference when compared to the intervention year (*p < .05*). No significance was found in any other comparisons of the grade 11 students, as noted below in Table 7 (*p < .05*).
Table 7

Comparison of 11th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to Baseline Years 2010, 2011, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47 (50%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39 (42%)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47 (50%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34 (45%)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39 (42%)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34 (47%)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
*p < .05

Figure 6, below, provides a visual representation of the percentage of 11th grade in-school suspension recidivism rates spanning all four years showing slight fluctuation from year to year.
*p < .05

Figure 6. Percent of 11th Grade In-School Suspension Recidivism Rates

Table 8, below, shows the data and results for 12th grade in-school suspension students for all baseline years compared to 2013.
Table 8

*Comparison of 12th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37 (39%)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18 (32%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18 (32%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14 (32%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 visits*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18 (32%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
* p < .05

The recidivism rates of students in grade 12 showed no statistical difference when compared to the intervention year (p < .05). No significance was found in any other comparisons of the grade 12 students, as noted below in Table 9 (p < .05).
Table 9

Comparison of 12th Grade In-School Suspension Attendance to Baseline Years 2010, 2011, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># One time Visit</th>
<th># 2 or more Visits</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37 (39%)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits*</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 visits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>37 (39%)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14 (32%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 visits</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 visits*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14 (32%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE = Fisher’s Exact; MW = Mann-Whitney
*p < .05

Figure 7, below, provides a visual representation of the percentage of 12th grade in-school suspension recidivism rates spanning all four years showing slight decreases in recidivism rates from years 2010 and 2011 to years 2012 and 2013.
Research Question 2: To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students?

This question was designed to determine the extent to which gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and disability classification of students have any connection to the number of times that students return to in-school suspension after receiving the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention. This section will provide descriptive demographic data by grade level as well as the results of the significance found when the truncated negative binomial regression analyses were conducted across all subgroups. To begin, Table 10, below, shows the descriptive demographic data by race, gender, socioeconomic status (represented by free/reduced lunch (FRL) status), students failing one or more course (FAIL), and disability classification

* $p < .05$

Figure 7. Percent of 12th Grade In-School Suspension Recidivism Rates
(represented by indicating whether or not the student is ESE classified) for ninth grade in-school suspension students for the three baseline years prior to the intervention year.

Table 10

*Descriptive Demographic Data by Race, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, Academic Failure, and Disability Classification of 9th Grade Students in the Baseline Years and Intervention Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% REPEAT</th>
<th># 3 years prior</th>
<th># Intervention Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Years Prior</td>
<td>Int. Year</td>
<td>Diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Black</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-White</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FRL</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FAIL</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ESE</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This descriptive data suggests there may be a greater potential for the intervention to have an effect on the non-black students, indicating a 24% difference in repeat offenses between the baseline years and intervention year. Additionally, a greater potential for effect can be seen with the failing students (19%) and the non-ESE students (18%) in the ninth grade (as indicated in bold font).
Table 11, below, shows the descriptive demographic data by race, gender, socioeconomic status, students failing one or more course, and disability classification for 10th grade in-school suspension students for the three baseline years prior to the intervention year.

Table 11

*Descriptive Demographic Data by Race, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, Academic Failure, and Disability Classification of 10th Grade Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% REPEAT</th>
<th># 3 years prior</th>
<th># Intervention Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Years Prior</td>
<td>Int. Year</td>
<td>Diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td><strong>17%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Black</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td><strong>3%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-White</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td><strong>12%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td><strong>11%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td><strong>5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FRL</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td><strong>22%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td><strong>-6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FAIL</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td><strong>12%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ESE</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td><strong>21%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This descriptive data suggests there may be a greater potential for the intervention to have an effect on the black students indicating a 17% difference in repeat offenses between the baseline years and intervention year. Additionally, a greater potential for effect can be seen with
the non-free/reduced lunch students (22%), failing students (12%) and the non-ESE students (21%) in grade 10.

Table 12, below, shows the descriptive demographic data by race, gender, socioeconomic status, students failing one or more course, and disability classification for 11th grade in-school suspension students for the three baseline years prior to the intervention year.

Table 12

*Descriptive Demographic Data by Race, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, Academic Failure, and Disability Classification of 11th Grade Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% REPEAT</th>
<th># 3 years prior</th>
<th># Intervention Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Years Prior</td>
<td>Int. Year</td>
<td>Diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Black</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-White</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FRL</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FAIL</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ESE</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This descriptive data suggests there may be greater potential for the intervention to have an effect on the non-black students indicating an 18% difference in repeat offenses between the
baseline years and intervention year. Additionally, a greater potential for effect can be seen with the white students (26%), male students (6%), and non-free/reduced lunch students (22%) in the 11th grade.

Table 13, below, shows the descriptive demographic data by race, gender, socioeconomic status, students failing one or more course, and disability classification for 12th grade in-school suspension students for the three baseline years prior to the intervention year.

Table 13

Descriptive Demographic Data by Race, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, Academic Failure, and Disability Classification of 12th Grade Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>% REPEAT</th>
<th># 3 years prior</th>
<th># Intervention Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Years Prior</td>
<td>Int. Year</td>
<td>Diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Black</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-White</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FRL</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIL</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-FAIL</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESE</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ESE</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This descriptive data suggests there may be greater potential for the intervention to have an effect on the black students indicating a 13% difference in repeat offenses between the baseline years and intervention year. Additionally, a greater potential for effect can be seen with the non-white students (12%), and ESE students (12%) in the 12th grade. Despite this descriptive data showing the potential effects by grade level, further statistical analysis was necessary for a more refined look into actual differences in overall interactions among the subgroups.

The only significant findings with this analysis were those across gender \((p < .05)\). When the truncated negative binomial regression analysis was conducted across gender, it was found that the intervention works differently for males and females. Table 14, below, shows the results of a Chi-Square analysis that looked at the overall interaction between gender, and the result implies a significant gender by intervention interaction \((p < .05)\).

Table 14

**Chi-Square Analysis of Female Students Across Grades 9-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>chi2</th>
<th>P&gt;chi2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.0725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>0.0102*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female#intervention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.0402*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

To illustrate further, Table 15, below, shows that the average predicted count for males who received the intervention was a third \((.389)\) of a visit lower than when they did not, indicating that males who received the intervention had fewer in-school suspension visits than males who did not receive the intervention.
Table 15

*Truncated Negative Binomial Regression Analysis of Male Students Across Grades 9-12*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>P&gt;</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>[95% Confidence Interval]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>-.3896419</td>
<td>.127319</td>
<td>-3.06</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
<td>-.6391825</td>
<td>-.1401013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Table 15 shows this difference to be statistically significant as these results suggest that the intervention was associated with fewer repeat visits for male students (*p < .05*). Furthermore, the intervention did not have a statistically significant effect on females showing a difference of only .01 visits less with the intervention for this subgroup as indicated below in Table 16 (*p < .05*).

Table 16

*Truncated Negative Binomial Regression Analysis of Female Students Across Grades 9-12*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>P&gt;</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>[95% Confidence Interval]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>-.0156799</td>
<td>.1302301</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>-.2709263</td>
<td>-.2395665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

The findings in this analysis also indicate a steady decline in the grade level number of visits overall for all subgroups which is visually represented in Figure 8, below.
**Figure 8.** Visual Representation of Decline in Number of In-School Suspension Visits Overall by Grade Level

The truncated negative binomial regression analysis final model shown below in Table 17 includes the interaction with gender, as well as all the covariates (significant and non-significant).
Table 17

**Truncated Negative Binomial Regression Analysis Final Model All Subgroups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visits2</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>P&gt;</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>[95% Confidence Interval]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race 2</td>
<td>.3106051</td>
<td>.0806379</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.1525577</td>
<td>.4686525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.1360454</td>
<td>.1345204</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.1276097</td>
<td>.3997006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>-.1811364</td>
<td>.0765592</td>
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*p < .05

**Phase II Participant Profiles**

**Student focus groups.** There were fifteen total student focus group participants, and three separate focus group sessions were conducted over the course of two weeks in May, 2013. The researcher originally intended to have four student focus groups consisting of four to six participants in each group; however, the number of students who returned informed consent forms signed by their parents did not allow for grouping in this manner. Because fifteen students
returned signed permission forms, the researcher created three separate five-member student focus groups. Based on the gender and racial breakdown of the overall in-school participants spanning four years, the students who participated in the focus group sessions were representative of these numbers. Specifically, the sample was dominantly male with only six female participants. The sample was also mainly made up of black students with four white student participants. Lastly, participants were evenly represented over all grade levels. Table 18 illustrates a composite profile of the student focus group participants.

Table 18

*Student Focus Group Participants (N=15)*

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<table>
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The researcher believes a couple of reasons may have accounted for a lower response rate than initially anticipated. First, many students may have simply forgotten to return the forms; this however could not be mitigated as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board protocol did not permit the researcher to provide verbal or written reminders to students. Additionally, the student focus group recruitment took place near the end of the school year leading the researcher to believe that preoccupation with end-of-course exams and excitement over summer break could have contributed to student absent-mindedness in this regard. Despite
these circumstances, the researcher was able to create three solid student focus groups each consisting of five student participants.

**Faculty and administrative focus groups.** There were a total of eight teacher participants, and two separate focus group sessions were conducted over the course of two weeks in May, 2013. The researcher originally intended to create three focus groups, each consisting of four to six faculty members; however, the number of faculty who responded to the recruitment email did not allow for grouping in this manner. Although a total of twelve teachers responded to the recruitment email allowing for two separate focus groups to be constructed, one teacher failed to show for the first session, and three teachers failed to show for the second session. Factors contributing to the low response rate and failure to show are two-fold. First, the focus group recruitment took place near the end of the school year during a time that teachers were busy with end-of-course exams and final grading deadlines. Second, the teachers who did not show up for the session reported forgetfulness and last-minute after school student make-up testing as the reasons for their inability to attend. Because of the separate focus group categories and time constraints associated with the end of the school year, those teachers who did not attend as originally planned were not rescheduled.

All six of the administrative members at the site school were recruited; five of those members responded and were scheduled for a focus group discussion in May, 2013. One of the members had a last-minute family emergency arise and one of the members was called away to a student disciplinary hearing. Consequently, the administrative focus group session was conducted with three administrative members to include the school principal, assistant principal, and behavior coach. Despite all recruited members not being present, the researcher was still able to obtain notable responses from the administrative team. Notwithstanding the researcher's
attempts to accommodate the schedules of the high school faculty and administrative team by holding the focus group sessions during the most convenient times for said personnel (after school hours), circumstances arose that were unforeseeable and unpreventable. Nonetheless, the researcher was able to create and conduct two teacher focus group sessions and one administrative focus group session that were informative and beneficial to this study. Table 19 shows a composite profile of faculty and administrative focus group participants.

Table 19

*Faculty/Administrative Focus Group Participants (N=11)*

<table>
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Research Question 3: What are the students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program in improving the overall behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school?

This question was designed to establish an understanding of student, teacher, and administrative perception of the effects of using a software-based intervention on the behavior of in-school suspension students. To address this question, the researcher used focus group discussions to elicit thoughts and beliefs on the in-school suspension program and Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum in place at the site school. This method was selected in order to provide the researcher with participants' thoughts and beliefs that could bring more meaning to the quantitative results from the first phase of this study.

**Student focus group results.** Student focus groups met one time only in a conference room located in an office suite of the site school. The focus group questions were designed in an
open-ended manner to allow students to expand on their overall feelings toward the in-school suspension program and the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum. The researcher did not provide the students with copies of the questions, but rather used the questions (with prompts as needed) to guide the discussion. The researcher used a combination of field notes, verbatim transcription, and thematic coding processes to organize the data into initial, focused, and emergent concepts. The following sections present the results of the student focus group analysis.

*Common concepts related to students' perceptions of the in-school suspension program.* Student participants discussed at length the strengths and weaknesses of the in-school suspension program at the site school. The concepts that emerged across all student focus groups included:

- In-school suspension is a more appropriate behavior consequence than of out-of-school suspension;
- Teachers do not send class work to students attending in-school suspension; and
- It is easier to complete class work within the in-school suspension environment versus the classroom environment.

*In-school suspension: more appropriate than out-of-school suspension.* Despite there being no mention of out-of-school suspension by the focus group moderator or in any of the questions designed, students began to make immediate comparisons of using in-school suspension as a behavior consequence versus using out-of-school suspension. Specifically, it was discussed by student participants that they appreciated being able to complete class work when given in-school suspension versus having to take zero credit when they were given out-of-school suspension. With in-school suspension as an option, students recognize that they are able
to keep up academically. For example, the words of one grade 12 male participant with repeat offenses to in-school suspension provide further insight:

I think ISS is better for you because if you already get in trouble at school and you get suspended, then really you're failing even more by going home and not being able to make up your work and all that. So, really, I think that OSS makes it seem like the schools do not care even more. You're at home for 3 or 5 days and then you get bad grades and, you know, it kind of frustrates you and you're like, “forget it” and then you can do whatever you want. I mean, I already don't like school, why not stay at home?

Another grade 12 male student with repeated visits to in-school suspension during the intervention year claimed:

I definitely think it's better than, or it's more of a punishment than being suspended completely because, you know, you have more freedom if you were at home. You can sleep in. But ISS is boring. You don't want to go back, for sure.

The fact that the students themselves recognize in-school suspension as a positive behavioral consequence provides another telling reason for the continuous use and strengthening of these programs with students at the secondary level.

*Teachers do not send class work to students.* Contrary to the positives, students also recognized a weakness with the in-school suspension program design at the site school and that is the failure of some teachers to send class work to students assigned to in-school suspension. Teachers are strongly encouraged to send student class work assignments to in-school suspension, but not all teachers at the site school do this. Failure to send student assignments defeats the purpose of helping students to stay caught up academically when assigned to in-
school suspension; for example, one grade nine female student with repeated visits to in-school suspension stated:

   ISS is like another punishment to me. What I mean by that, I mean that when it comes down to ISS, you can't get work because teachers don't send it. I don't think we should have it [ISS] because what's the point in being in ISS if we ain't (sic) getting our work?

   This supports the need for improvement and policy change at the site school, perhaps making it mandatory that teachers provide class work assignments to their students assigned to in-school suspension. If a partial purpose of in-school suspension is to give students the opportunity to stay caught up academically, then all teachers with students assigned to in-school suspension should be doing their part in this regard.

   *It is easier to complete class work within the in-school suspension environment versus the classroom environment.* Another interesting concept that emerged from repeat and non-repeating in-school suspension students is that students feel it is easier to complete class work when they are assigned to in-school suspension versus being in the actual classroom. Several students participating within separate focus group discussions shared the following:

   "It's easier to do your work in ISS because it's quiet."

   "I get my work done in ISS, I ain't [sic] even gonna [sic] lie."

   "It is kind of good, you know, to get your work done in ISS."

   "It [ISS] will help you get your grades up here and there."

   While this is certainly a strength of the in-school suspension program, it could also be indicative of weaknesses in classrooms at the site school. Specifically, if students indicate that they are more likely to complete their work in the disciplined and quiet environment that the in-school
suspension program provides, such structure may be lacking in classrooms. These student comments bring about the notion that a lack of behavioral and instructional management by classroom teachers may be partially to blame for a certain degree of academic and behavioral weaknesses within the site school.

*Common concepts related to students' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program.* Student participants shared many opinions, to include both strengths and weaknesses of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program. The common concepts that materialized about the program included:

- Student retention and relevancy of specific behavioral tutorials;
- Association of future behavioral decisions to strategies learned in Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorials;
- Reinforcement of appropriate behaviors that students have already been taught; and
- Lack of accountability and time for program completion.

*Student retention and relevancy of Ripple Effects® for Teens.* When students were prompted with the questions, "How did Ripple Effects make you feel?" there were many revealing responses that speak to the impact of student retention and relevancy of the behavioral tutorials presented through the in-school suspension lesson plan designed for students. For example, one grade 10 female student with only one visit during 2013 shared that:

> It was fun to me 'cause *(sic)* when you're in ISS, you can't really do anything. I was on the computer playing the games on the little things [Ripple Effects tutorials], but at the same time it was teaching me responsibility.

Another grade nine female student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension shared a powerful revelation when she commented:
I say it [Ripple Effects] was good because I learned more stuff about what other people be [sic] going through. I heard their side of the story and it made me feel like, "Dang, I thought I had a messed up life, but their life is messed up. I'll have this life I got [sic] now than to have their life and get raped, beat, and stuff. I'd rather have this life".

Lastly, a grade 10 male student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension shared that he, "liked it and the stories they [Ripple Effects® for Teens] tell...yeah, it relates to something that might occur in my life."

This qualitative data is in accordance with the quantitative results reported earlier in this chapter which show a statistically significant decrease in the in-school suspension recidivism rates of the earlier grade high school students when compared to the intervention year.

Association of future behavioral decisions to Ripple Effects® for Teens. One grade 10 male student with repeat visits to in-school suspension commented that Ripple Effects® for Teens:

Shows you how to go beyond some types of decisions in your life. Like, if you have an altercation with somebody, it shows you the way of how to avoid the altercation by walking away and not saying nothing (sic) about it or saying anything to that person.

Another grade nine female student with repeated visits to in-school suspension indicated that the program made her feel like, "When something else is going on, I could use that [Ripple Effects] instead of doing what I did; you know, acknowledge my mistakes." This same participant went on to say:
Yeah, on there [Ripple Effects], when they say, "go with your first mind" about certain stuff, like when I wanted to do something bad, but my first mind told me, "don't do it", and my second mind told me, "do it"...I went with my first mind, and I didn't get in trouble.

These comments demonstrate an ideal example of increased awareness by revealing how this student not only retained the strategies presented in Ripple Effects® for Teens, but also how she exercised control over her own decision-making by implementing what she had learned.

Incidentally, all of the student responses shared thus far in the results were by grade nine and 10 students where significant decreases were seen in the recidivism rates when compared to the intervention year. Contrastingly, there were no responses with similar effect offered by students in grades 11 or 12 which coincide with the quantitative data results showing no significant change in the recidivism rates of students across those grade levels.

Reinforcement of appropriate behaviors. Many students in the upper grade levels appeared to be less impressed or influenced by the Ripple Effects® for Teens program by indicating that the curriculum only acted as reinforcement for appropriate behaviors that they had already been taught. Specifically, two grade 11 male students, each with only one visit to in-school suspension, stated, "I thought it was really just like, a bunch of stuff that I already kind of knew" and "It was like, mostly things that our parents already told us basically; common sense things you learn over the years." In a separate focus group, a grade 12 female student with repeated visits to in-school suspension stated that, "It's all common sense to me, so I know everything already."

The fact that the grade 11 and 12 students perceived that the program did not teach them anything new, but only reinforced what they had already been taught is noteworthy to this study.
in that it provides an explanation as to why significant change was not seen in the recidivism rates of the older students. Furthermore, this provides the researcher and site school with data that supports the need for modification of the current in-school suspension program that will provide increased behavioral support and more intensive intervention to students in the upper grade levels.

*Lack of accountability and time for Ripple Effects® for Teens completion.* A common theme across all student focus groups was the lack of student accountability to complete the behavioral tutorials assigned. Specifically, a grade 12 male student with repeated visits to in-school suspension shared the following opinions:

You should, I think you should come up with some PowerPoint activities or a study guide or something that's involved with it where you have to explain it more......and you should ask them about stuff that relates to them...you should maybe have a little talk, you know, about what's going on with them and what kind of referral they got.

This student is referring, in part, to the suggested implementation by the Ripple Effects® for Teens program creators involving limited teacher interaction with students during program use. Particularly, it is recommended that the program be used with limited redirection and interaction from the educators utilizing the program with students; however, according to student comments, this is a much-needed student completion accountability component that is lacking in the program at the site school.

Students also indicated that they felt rushed to complete the program due to the length of the tutorials and the time constraints that coincide with being assigned to in-school suspension for a period of one to five days. For example, one student stated:
I think that it needs improvement because there is a lot of information on there and by the end of the day I was just trying to get through as fast as possible. I think if you're gonna [sic] do something like that, it should be more teacher interaction than just program involvement by itself.

Through the focused discussions, it was revealed that students would like to have more accountability when it comes to completing the assigned tutorials. Furthermore, students shared that they feel rushed to complete the tutorials which indicates the need for modification of the number of assigned tutorials in order to eliminate the pressure on students to complete the tutorials in a limited amount of time.

Common concepts related to students’ perceptions of the effect of Ripple Effects® for Teens program on classroom behavior change. It was fascinating to learn of students’ perception of how Ripple Effects® for Teens did or did not have an overall effect on their behavior after returning to the classroom. The common perceptions that became visible throughout the focus discussions included:

- Ripple Effects® for Teens contributed to no repeated visits to in-school suspension;
- In-school suspension as a deterrent in general; and
- Student age to blame for Ripple Effects® for Teens having no influence on behavior.

Ripple Effects® for Teens contributed to no repeated visits. When presented with the question of whether or not overall classroom behavior had improved since working on the Ripple Effects® for Teens program, one grade 11 male student with only one visit to in-school suspension during 2013 indicated:
I think yeah because I haven't been back [to ISS] since after the Ripple Effects. I remember last year we didn't have it [Ripple Effects in ISS] and I went back like twice, but this year I've only been to ISS one time, so I think it did.

_In-school suspension as a deterrent._ Several other students who also had only one visit to in-school suspension contributed their behavior change strictly to their disdain for the in-school suspension program in general. These students indicated that the isolation combined with not being able to talk or move about the room played a part in their desire not to return to in-school suspension. Specifically, one grade 11 male student with only one visit during the 2013 school year stated:

Yeah, I guess, but I don't think it's necessarily directly coordinated towards the Ripple Effects program...it's more like, when I was in ISS, I hated it, and I just didn't want to go back.

The student perceptions support the quantitative findings as to how the non-repeating students view the Ripple Effects® for Teens and in-school suspension programs as a whole. Overall, it appears that a combination of the two serves as a deterrent to committing subsequent behavioral offenses.

_Student age to blame for Ripple Effects® for Teens having no influence on behavior._ One grade 12 male student with repeated visits to in-school suspension indicated that his age was the factor as to why the program did not have an effect on his behavior:

At my age, that program is not going to affect my life any. If you tell me I gotta [sic] do it to get out of ISS, I'm gonna [sic] do whatever I gotta [sic] do to get out.

I mean, it's pointless to me, to tell ya [sic] the truth.
Again, this student's perception is important to this study because it correlates to the quantitative results for the upper classmen students who did not have a significant decrease in repeat offender occurrences. This student feedback can be used to create additional program supports for students across all grade levels.

*Common concepts related to students' perceptions of the most memorable or useful* Ripple Effects® for Teens software program tutorials. Students across all focus groups were eager to share their opinions on specific behavioral tutorials that they believed to be the most memorable or contributors to their success. Common favorites that emerged were:

- Bullying;
- Peer Pressure; and
- Talking back.

*Bullying.* Students from one focus group indicated that bullying was a memorable topic for them, and they went on to suggest that the bullying tutorial should be made available to other students in the school and not just to in-school suspension students. When prompted by the focus group moderator for ideas on how to make that happen, students provided ample suggestions to include making Ripple Effects® for Teens available to other students through computer classes, reading classes, English classes, and the morning announcements. The fact that students remembered this tutorial and believed it to be important enough to share with all students within the school environment signifies that there could be instances of bullying occurring within the school population, and as a result, this particular tutorial stood out in the minds of student participants.
Peer pressure. One grade 10 male student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension indicated that he specifically remembered the peer pressure topic and that it helped him to "walk away from certain things and don't let it get to you."

Talking back. One grade nine male student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension indicated that he learned "how to not talk back at people."

Providing specific references to tutorial topics suggests that students retained what they learned from Ripple Effects® for Teens and applied it in real life situations that they were presented with after they returned to the regular classroom/school routine.

Common concepts related to students' perceptions of how the Ripple Effects® for Teens program could be improved. Students across all focus groups provided many suggestions when prompted on how the Ripple Effects® for Teens program could be made better. Common suggestions for improvement were:

- Program graphics and
- More real life scenarios.

Program graphics. Students across all focus groups and grade levels described the program graphics to be "too immature" for their age. Additionally, students indicated that the program felt "old" and needed to be "more up to date and more modern". These views show a relationship to the quantitative data and possibly provide an additional explanation as to why there was not a more significant decrease in the recidivism rates of students.

Real life scenarios. Students across all focus groups expressed the desire to see more "real life scenarios" embedded within the program content. For example, one grade 10 male student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension indicated that the program could be made better by:
They want to show more real life, about going through stuff. You know how people have altercations and stuff? They should show like two people arguing about the situation and then have like a questions asking, "how should this person go about this?" instead of having a mouse and a car chased by a cat or something like that.

This student is referring to the cartoons displayed throughout some of the tutorials and indicates that the program could be made better by using real world situations as opposed to the cartoon depictions. This overlaps with the idea above having to do with improving the graphics in the program. Based on student responses, it appears that students in grades nine through twelve favor real characters over fictional cartoon characters.

Overall, students' perceptions of the in-school suspension and Ripple Effects® for Teens programs are positive. However, while students do believe the programs to be useful and appropriate, they also indicated areas that could be improved upon during future use.

**Faculty focus group results.** Faculty focus groups met one time only in a conference room located in an office suite of the school. The focus group questions were designed in an open-ended manner to allow teachers to expand on their overall feelings toward the in-school suspension program and the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum. The researcher did not provide the teachers with copies of the questions, but rather used the questions (with prompts as needed) to guide the discussion. The researcher used a combination of field notes, verbatim transcription, and thematic coding processes to organize the data into initial, focused, and emergent concepts. The following sections present the results of the faculty focus group analysis.
Common concepts related to teachers' perceptions of the in-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior. Teacher participants discussed at length the strengths and weaknesses of the in-school suspension program at the site school. The concepts that emerged across both teacher focus groups included:

- In-school suspension is a more appropriate behavior consequence than of out-of-school suspension;
- In-school suspension is appropriate behavior consequence for some behaviors, but not all;
- Increased teacher/student academic accountability; and
- Student behavior post in-school suspension.

In-school suspension: more appropriate than out-of-school suspension. Similar to student responses and despite there being no mention of out-of-school suspension by the focus group moderator, teachers began to make immediate comparisons of using in-school suspension as a behavior consequence versus using out-of-school suspension or other options. Specifically, one teacher commented that in-school suspension is:

A nice intermediate between what we used to have [before the school had an ISS program]...and then, "okay, you're suspended" and then students couldn't make up tests or anything else. It was like, academically, regular suspension can be a killer, especially for missed tests when we're not allowed to let them make them up. So, having them in ISS, especially if you're sending your assignments down, at least they're still getting their class work and they're still in that academic setting as opposed to just being at home playing the Xbox, chilling for a few days, missing everything in class. I think it's a nice in-between.
While teachers spoke to the appropriateness of in-school suspension, they also indicated it to be inappropriate in some instances.

*In-school suspension is appropriate behavior consequence for some behaviors, but not all.* Throughout the focused discussions, it came to light that teachers believed in-school suspension to be an inappropriate consequence at times. For example, one teacher expressed:

I think if the punishment fits that. Like one kid was skipping all last week and had missed like five days of class, but then got three days of ISS. So, now they're going to miss three more days of my class. So, that kind of, I want their punishment to be in my class, you know, not to be out again because some of them do like getting out of class. You know?

Another teacher agreed with this statement by adding, "I agree, you know, with the, 'if it fits the crime' idea."

The teachers went on to discuss their discord of using in-school suspension with students who repeatedly receive office disciplinary referrals (referred to at the site school as repeat offenders) by sharing their belief that in-school suspension simply does not help these students. One teacher in particular said, "Well, to me, if they are repeat offenders and they keep ending up in ISS, then ISS is not working for them." Another teacher added, "It really depends on the student; there are some that are going to make that cycle [repeated visits to ISS] regardless of what is happening." Lastly, a teacher commented:

The only problem that I have with ISS is that it takes too long to get there in some cases. It's warning, warning, warning, behavior modification, contact the parent; but, it takes so long to get there that the bad behavior is almost engrained by the time we try to fix it.
These frustrations conveyed by the teachers hint at the need for more intensive interventions as well as modifications to the disciplinary adjudication guidelines for students who repeatedly offend.

*Increased teacher/student academic accountability.* Teachers perceive that the in-school suspension program at the site school holds teachers accountable for sending classroom assignments to students who are assigned to in-school suspension. In particular, one teacher shared the following with regard to an increased accountability factor for teachers and students within the in-school suspension program:

> It seems like this year there is more of an accountability piece for the students...they have the avenue of doing our class work...and it kind of reinforces, or it kind of makes it okay for you as a teacher to have to get the work together and make the effort to get it down there [to ISS] when you know that there is going to be some enforcement, and the accountability is there for the kids, too.

This response speaks to the importance of program design and to the appropriateness of the staffing selection for the program. Another teacher agreed with this statement and added:

> Some of my kids go and they come back and their grade actually improves because they do their work there, but they sometimes won't do it for me in class. You know, I guess it's like because of distractions or they're trying to talk to their friends in class; whereas in ISS they don't have of those same kinds of distractions. So, they come back and I'm actually able to grade their work. You know?"

Dissimilar to the increased accountability factor teachers spoke about, student focus group participants complained that teachers did not send work as they should. One teacher also
acknowledged this when she stated, "I think, too, some of my kids go to ISS, but some of the teachers don't send them anything to do, so they end up getting even more behind." This same teacher goes on to provide a possible explanation for this by declaring:

You know, and I have some [students] that don't do it anyway when they are sitting in my class, so chances are they [ISS students] probably are not getting a lot [class assignments] from me on those particular students because I know that they are not going to do it.

While some focus group participants perceived that accountability had increased, they also acknowledged that there are some teachers who do not send class assignments to students. According to the teacher participants, this appears to be, in part, because of the thought process that if a student is not completing work in class, the teacher then assumes that it would be a waste of time to send work for the student to complete in in-school suspension. Because teachers perceive it to be this way, there appears to be a lack of communication between the in-school suspension educator and teachers with regard to in-school suspension policies and expectations.

Despite the increased accountability factor discussed above, teachers comments were taken a step further to reveal a major academic concern with regard to students returning to class after an in-school suspension visit. To illustrate, one teacher offered the following:

I had one girl who ended up in ISS for three days for skipping, and when she came back [to class], she kept telling me, "I don't know how to do any of this" and I said, "Well, I sent assignments to you, and I told you to read the book". So, she even caught on to the fact that, well, beyond just the consequences of being in
ISS, "I [the student] don't have a clue what's going on here," and realized that it was affecting her academics, too.

This articulates the importance of student participation in instructional time within the classroom; students obviously miss out on important classroom instruction when assigned to in-school suspension.

*Student behavior post in-school suspension visit.* All teachers in both focus groups spoke compellingly to noticeable classroom behavioral changes in students returning to their classrooms after an in-school suspension visit. When asked the question, "Do you feel that overall student classroom behavior has improved since implementing in-school suspension [at the site school]," one teacher of students in grades nine and twelve shared the following:

Yes, I do...tremendously because...before they [ISS students] did not care. Now, it's different. They come back to class and they are much more cognizant of what they need to get done and how they need to behave...they realize if they mess up again, they have to go back again [to ISS]...it seems like they're much more aware of that and they don't want to [go back to ISS]. They're more positive when they come back [to class from ISS].

Immediately after making this comment, another focus group participated asked this teacher if she saw the same changes with her grade nine students as with her grade twelve students, to which she replied:

I sure do. As a matter of fact, I just had a kid that came out of ISS. He was horrible before and it's been maybe two weeks now and he has been wonderful.

The same wonderful for the two weeks.
This response correlates to what the quantitative data shows with the repeat visits for grade nine students, but is not supportive of the results for students in grade 12.

*Common concepts related to teachers' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program as a curriculum for in-school suspension students and its impact on student behavior.* Teacher participants conversed extensively about their perceptions of the impact of Ripple Effects® for Teens on student behavior. The themes that emerged across both teacher focus groups included:

- Specific changes in behavioral characteristics of students post Ripple Effects® for Teens;
- Ripple Effects® for Teens as a deterrent to poor behavior; and
- Prolonged period of time before student deflects to original behavior.

*Specific changes in behavioral characteristics of students post Ripple Effects® for Teens.* Teachers across both focus groups spoke to specific behavioral changes they noticed in students who attended in-school suspension and participated in Ripple Effects® for Teens during the 2013 school year. For example, one teacher shared a story having to do with a student who had recently completed Ripple Effects® for Teens:

> I had a situation the other day where a girl had just come out of ISS. She and some other girls were in a place where they shouldn't have been. There was another one of my students that got involved in it from another class. She was supposed to be going to the Clinic, but she stopped by the bathroom and encountered these other girls. Well, the girl that had just come out of ISS said to me, “But we did the right thing, we told them that she did not come in here to be with us, that she was not part of our group that got in real bad trouble, that she just got in trouble because she stopped in the bathroom rather than going straight to
the clinic". So, I think that goes with the intervention piece. It's making them [ISS students] think that there is a difference between right and wrong, and maybe they are understanding it from our perspective. I just thought it was kind of unusual because this particular student would typically have taken all of them down the river with her. Just getting back from ISS, about to go back to ISS because of the hair incident, but still having a twinge of moral fiber that ran through this encounter and went to bat for this other girl. I said to her, "You know, this is the little good thing that's come out of this."

Another teacher then followed this story up with a contribution of her own:

You know, it's interesting...because that reminds me of a situation about a week back. One of my girls had this cute little dress on, and I said, "That is a very cute dress" and she said, "Thanks. I learned that in ISS." I guess it was like, how to accept a compliment or whatever.

Other teachers shared brief examples to this same effect, "...they're a lot nicer, and I would say they have a much better attitude and they were more patient [upon completing Ripple Effects and returning to class]..." and "...after returning from ISS, he [student] followed my directive without a blowup."

*Ripple Effects® for Teens as a deterrent to poor behavior.* Teachers also indicated that they believed the intervention component now makes in-school suspension a deterrent to poor student behavior. One teacher stated that he did not know of "any kids that look forward to it [ISS] now; they used to just go in there and chill, read a book...before the intervention, it was like ISS was no big deal; they loved it; it was like vacation to them." Another teacher continued in this same direction by stating that in-school suspension "doesn't seem to be like the vacation
that kids used to [before implementation of Ripple Effects] make it out to be." To conclude, one teacher summed it up in these words, "I think it would be kind of ridiculous to even have an ISS without that [intervention component] because all you're doing then is taking time away from them [students] without tell them, 'No, this is how you're really supposed to behave'."

These comments align partially with student beliefs with regard to in-school suspension as a deterrent to poor classroom behavior. The difference between student and teacher perception though is that teachers accredit Ripple Effects® for Teens as a contributor to improved behavior; whereas some students attributed their disdain for the structure and isolation of in-school suspension as the main contributor to their behavior change.

*Prolonged period of time before student deflects to original behavior.* Teachers also believed that the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention was the reason that students maintained appropriate classroom behavior for a longer period of time before reoffending. One teacher shared that he doesn't "have a tendency to have to turn around and send a kid right back to ISS" since implementation of Ripple Effects® for Teens. A different teacher shared that during the 2013 school year, she "never had a student that went right back to ISS; never."

*Common concepts related to teachers' perceptions of how the in-school suspension program could be improved.* Teachers across both focus groups provided many suggestions when prompted on how in-school suspension could be improved. Common themes in suggestions for improvement were:

- Increased communication between administrative deans, in-school suspension educator, teachers, and students and
- Increased teaching of replacement behaviors throughout school and classrooms.
Increased communication between administrative deans, in-school suspension educator, teachers, and students. During the focused discussions, teachers touched on the benefits of increased communication between the administrative deans, in-school suspension educator, teachers, and students. Specifically, teachers complained that, unless they actually wrote the disciplinary referral on the student assigned to in-school suspension, they had no way of knowing why the student was assigned to in-school suspension. One teacher stated, "Well, it would help if we knew why; what behavior we're trying to modify in the whole process."

Another teacher agreed to this by saying, "Yeah, I think if we did know why then we could all intervene; we could monitor that behavior in our own classrooms."

Another teacher made the suggestion of increasing communication across classroom teachers of the same student and including the students themselves in that communication. For example:

One thing that I think could help ISS is for the teachers to talk and if one teacher doesn't have behavior problems with that specific student or that student does behave well for them, you could talk to that teacher to see what that teacher is doing to have that student behave.

A second teacher followed this thought by providing further support for this idea by explaining:

That would be a good idea because if you have a kid that connects with a teacher...it would be so much easier if we could go to that teacher for advice. I did that once. I went to talk to Mr. Doe [name has been omitted to protect privacy] about a kid. The kid just wasn't doing anything you know, so I just went to talk to him because we both have the kid. Mr. Doe said, "Yeah, I can speak to him." And the kid came in with a whole different attitude and he's [the student] like, "You
know what, I'm going to do my work; I'm really gonna [sic] work to try and pass this class”.

*Increased teaching of replacement behaviors in classrooms.* Teachers agreed, overall, to the need for increased teaching of appropriate behaviors in classrooms throughout the school. Particularly, one teacher explained:

One of the underlying commonality to me is the reinforcement of positive behaviors. You're doing that in ISS; they are learning about those replacement behaviors. If we could do more of that in the classroom then at least that part of the expectation would be consistent. You know, what they are expected to do in ISS and the behavior that we are trying to alleviate by the fact that they've ended up in ISS. Whether they are in the cafeteria, in the hallway, in the classroom, and I don't know if that's the RtI part of that. The flip side is that it's hard to implement that in the classroom because everybody has their own way of managing their classroom.

Another teacher elaborated further in support of this concept:

We all have our classroom rules, and by the time that they [students] get to high school, we always think that they should know how to act, and they should know because they've been in school already for ten years. But they don't really understand or they just choose not to, but I do think that having a situation where they go in and get that reinforcement of what is proper classroom behavior and etiquette and how their behavior affects everyone around them and the environment.
Ultimately, teachers indicated satisfaction with the in-school suspension program, but did have suggestions on ways that the program could be strengthened for future use. Teachers overall perceived the in-school suspension and Ripple Effects® for Teens programs to be effective in remediating student behaviors.

**Administrative focus group results.** The administrative focus group met one time only in a conference room located in an office suite of the school. The focus group questions were designed in an open-ended manner to allow members of the school's administrative team to expand on their overall feelings toward the in-school suspension program and the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum. The researcher did not provide the administrators with copies of the questions, but rather used the questions (with prompts as needed) to guide the discussion. The researcher used a combination of field notes, verbatim transcription, and thematic coding processes to organize the data into initial, focused, and emergent concepts. The following section presents the results of the administrative focus group analysis.

**Common concepts related to administrators' perceptions of the in-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior.** Administrative participants discussed at length the strengths of the in-school suspension program at the site school. The concepts that emerged during the administrative focused discussion included:

- In-school suspension is a more appropriate behavior consequence than of out-of-school suspension and
- Staffing the in-school suspension program.

*In-school suspension is a more appropriate behavior consequence than of out-of-school suspension.* The administrative team, following the common pattern of student and teacher
responses previously presented, immediately discussed in-school suspension as a positive alternative to out-of-school suspension.

The principal indicated that he believed it to be appropriate because it "keeps the student in school". The assistant principal agreed and added that he believed it to be appropriate because the program provides "positive consequences even for those students who come in there [ISS] for negative reasons...gives them the opportunity to work their way out if they meet our point system [referring to the point system that governs the one-day early release from ISS]." Lastly, the behavior coach stressed the appropriateness of in-school suspension as it relates to using it will the entire school population. She commented specifically, "Our ISS is inclusive of all students, not just regular education students, but also our special needs population..." and she went on to add that in-school suspension allows the special education students to "stay in school and do work, but also to make up things that they might have missed out on prior to [ISS]."

**Staffing the in-school suspension program.** In true administrative fashion, the focus group participants' discussions led to the organizational aspects of what they believed to be the foundation of a successful in-school suspension program. The principal stated:

Not just because of the plan or the program that we have in place, but because of those people who are administering and implementing those programs...the efforts and the trainings that they've put forth in bringing all people [students, administration, teachers] on board.

The behavior coach added to this concept by indicating the importance of the in-school suspension educator in possessing an "ESE certification so that I know that they [ESE students] are getting that help that they need."
Common concepts related to administrators' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program as a curriculum for in-school suspension students and its impact on student behavior. During the focused discussions, administrative participants shared their perceptions of the impact of Ripple Effects® for Teens on student behavior; common themes that emerged included:

- Specific changes in behavioral characteristics of students post Ripple Effects® for Teens and
- School-wide changes.

Specific changes in behavioral characteristics of students post Ripple Effects® for Teens.

All members of the administrative team appeared to be directly involved in the behavioral processes at the site school, as they were able to speak to specific behavioral changes they noticed in students who attended in-school suspension and participated in Ripple Effects® for Teens during the 2013 school year. For example, the principal pointed out that "...our [the site school] ISS program is very different from the traditional in-school suspension," and the assistant principal followed this up by offering further explanation:

The students go through the Ripple Effects program which is a program designed to show them [ISS students] other people [referring to the fictional characters represented in the software program] who have had that same negative behavior and how they have overcome it...gives them an opportunity to think about correcting those issues and coming up with a plan so that they do not return to ISS.

The behavior coach contributed to this discussion by sharing that she perceived Ripple Effects® for Teens to:
Show them [ISS students] exactly what the problem is that they had instead of just merely saying “you're assigned to ISS” and them not understanding why; it gives them the opportunity to understand the behavior that took place and how they can go about correcting it so that when they come back out into the regular classroom, they'll know how to handle themselves...instead of getting into trouble...I have had several students actually request to do ISS; not because they felt it was easier, but because it's a way for them to stay on track academically and gives the opportunity for behavioral interventions.

The principal then went on to provide specific examples of interactions he had with students after completing Ripple Effects® for Teens:

Often times I will ask them [ISS students] how they are doing or what they are doing in ISS; the feedback that I've gotten has been very positive. They understand the intent and they seem to be willingly learning from it. I can actually name three students off the top of my head, and not all three have been in there repeatedly. I've asked and they've said that it was not busy work, but it kept them focused and kept them on task and doing the program where you choose the scenarios, and I'm just describing in their words verbatim...indicated to me that they were able to learn how to better make decisions from watching whatever it is that they were watching. I'm assuming it is the Ripple Effects part of it.

*School-wide changes.* Administrative participants indicated that they perceive an overall change in the school climate. For example, the assistant principal noted that:

I have talked to students that have been in there [ISS] and they do see the impact and value of what's going on, but overall in the school, we can tell that we're
beginning to see a school-wide behavior change. I've had several teachers that do not work at this school or visitors that have come to the school say how polite our students were. That they [students] asked, "How are you doing?" or "Can I help you?" and that is not something that we saw when I first came to this school. We're beginning to see that change, and I believe that all of that is a direct result of the policies and things we've put in place as far as ISS and Ripple Effects.

*Common concepts related to administrators' perceptions of how the in-school suspension program could be improved.* The administrative participants indicated a couple of program changes that they would like to see. First, they want to take a more profound approach to remediating the behaviors of repeat offender students. Specifically, the assistant principal suggested concentrating on students who:

- Are going to move toward OSS [out-of-school suspension]...look for ways to prevent students from going down that path...working with Tier II and Tier III interventions so that we can keep them in school. We really need to improve on that.

The principal followed this thought by suggesting that one way to do this would be through:

- A parental component...there needs to be some way to have parents involved, especially with those students who are becoming repeat offenders, second and third time in ISS...some way of educating parents and having them involved in the changing of those behaviors that the kids are continuing to display.

Overall, the administrative participants' indicated satisfaction with the in-school suspension and Ripple Effects® for Teens programs in place and suggested ways to strengthen the successes of both in the future.
Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

This final chapter begins with an overview of the problem of practice and research design methods chosen, along with a review of the findings. Following this overview, the results reported in the previous chapter will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and prior scholarly research used to guide this study. The limitations of this study will then be discussed and will conclude with a dialogue of the functional characteristics of this study and its importance to current practice and future research. Finally, the researcher will close with a personal reflection piece related to the researcher’s experiences throughout this process and thoughts related to the findings in this study.

Summary of Problem

Disciplinary incidences resulting in exclusionary behavioral consequences, namely out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, are an immense issue of concern in public high schools across many districts in the United States (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). Because of damaging outcomes to the academic and social growth of students, research supports the use of in-school suspension as a way for education leaders to lesson those effects (Allman & Slate, 2011). In-school suspension is especially appealing to school leaders because it reduces absenteeism brought on by exclusionary consequences and can be used freely with exceptional education students which facilitate school disciplinarians in maintaining compliance with IDEA regulations. However, critics of in-school suspension have argued for enhancement of these programs to include the delivery of individualized behavioral intervention curriculum that will help to remediate the behaviors of its participants thus reducing the repeated behavioral offenses of at-risk students (Michail, 2011; Morris & Howard, 2003). The concerns of critics have been
validated through previous research and calls for the immediate consideration of school leaders, disciplinarians, and teachers if an overall improvement in student behavior is to be achieved.

In an attempt to answer this call and intervene before behaviors escalate to consequences of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions, high school leaders have begun implementing Response to Intervention behavioral (RtI-B) models as a way to provide individualized interventions to students identified as at-risk. Because the primary element of RtI-B is a research-based intervention component, a way to strengthen current in-school suspension programs is to use this environment as a venue to deliver individualized interventions to students. However, despite this potential solution, there are barriers hindering this necessary component from being implemented. First, a school must have a sound and structured in-school suspension design that is staffed by a certified and highly qualified educator. Next, because it is typical of in-school suspension programs to be staffed by only one individual, there must be an available curriculum that is efficient in its delivery. Last, the curriculum selected should be economical, research-based, and have the capability of being individualized to students' needs taking into consideration that students are assigned to in-school suspension for a variety of different offenses and time periods. Previous literature shows that many high school in-school suspension programs struggle with implementing these essential components, and as a result, office disciplinary referrals and repeated incidences to in-school suspension are a continuous worry for all stakeholders.

The quantitative purpose of this mixed-methods study was to evaluate the effects of an individualized computer-based social learning curriculum on the behavior of in-school suspension students. Secondly, a focus group component was used to obtain student, teacher, and administrative perspective of the effects of an intervention curriculum on student behavior.
Because the intervention evaluated is centered in social learning and uses various characteristics of observational learning methods in its design, the focused discussions provided the researcher with insight into the impact of these learning methods on the self-efficacy of students. Three research questions structured the exploration of this problem:

1. To what extent has the Ripple Effects® for Teens software, a computer-based behavioral intervention program, affected the behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school as measured by a decrease in the number of repeat offender occurrences?

2. To what extent does gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and the disability classification of students correlate with the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students?

3. What are the students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens software program in improving the overall behavior of students assigned to in-school suspension in an urban high school?

**Review of the Methods**

A two-part mixed-methods design was selected to carry out this study. A quantitative approach was used in phase one to address research questions one and two regarding the effect of the intervention on the behavior of students and the correlation of specific variables to recidivism rates. A qualitative approach was added to address research question three to obtain the perceptions of participants using the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention in the in-school suspension program and its effects on student behavior. Data collection and analysis included the following components:

- In-school suspension attendance records for the baseline years of 2010, 2011, and 2012;
• In-school suspension attendance records for 2013, the intervention year;
• A total of six focused discussions consisting of three student groups, two faculty groups, and one administrative group; and
• Researcher’s field notes, verbatim transcription, and thematic coding methods.

**Phase I.** Specifically, phase one of the study included collection and analysis of in-school suspension attendance records spanning a period of three years (prior to the study year) in order to establish baseline knowledge of student attendance and recidivism rates. There were a combined total of 830 student attendees during the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. In-school suspension records for the intervention implementation year, totaling 324 students, were also obtained to allow the researcher to make comparisons of student attendance in and between the baseline and intervention years. Statistical analyses of the attendance data using the Fisher’s Exact Probability test, Mann-Whitney Test, and truncated negative binomial regression were used in phase one of this study.

Fisher's Exact tests were carried out to show if student in-school suspension recidivism rates for the intervention year were different than a non-intervention baseline year. The Mann-Whitney Test was also used to show if there were changes in the recidivism rates of repeat offender students who received the intervention more than once during 2013. In particular, the Mann-Whitney tests measured change in the recidivism rates of students who were assigned to in-school suspension and completed the intervention each time they visited in-school suspension (repeated exposure to the intervention). The statistical method used to answer research question two was the truncated negative binomial regression analysis, which was administered to determine the existence or nonexistence of relationships between socioeconomic status,
academic failure, and disability classification of repeat offender in-school suspension students before and after the intervention.

**Phase II.** All students who attended in-school suspension and participated in the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum during the intervention year were invited to participate in the focus groups that produced phase two of this study; ultimately, 15 students returned parental consent forms and three focused discussions were subsequently conducted. Recruitment of faculty for focus group participation was purposeful in order to establish groups of teachers who taught in-school suspension participants during the study year; 12 out of 22 teachers committed to focus group participation, but only eight ended up participating due to unforeseen scheduling constraints. Therefore, two separate teacher focus group sessions were conducted. Because there were only six members of the administrative team, all six were recruited to participate in a focused discussion. Five members responded and were scheduled, but only three participated due to unforeseen scheduling constraints. After review of the attendance data in phase one, the researcher then developed focus group questions that would bring forth student, faculty, and administrative perception of the effects of Ripple Effects® for Teens on student behavior. The questions designed concentrated on: (1) perception of in-school suspension as a behavior consequence; (2) perception of the effects of the intervention on student behavior change; and (3) perceptions of how the intervention program could be improved. This concentration provided the researcher with a way to come to a more nuanced understanding of the findings from phase one of this study.

**Summary of the Findings**

**Research question one.** The analysis of in-school suspension attendance and recidivism rates of the baseline years as compared in and between the intervention year indicated a
statistically significant decrease in the recidivism rates of students in grades nine. There was significant change found with grade 10 students between the baseline year of 2011 when compared to the intervention year; however, this was the only significant change found within this grade level. There was no significant change of students in grades 11 and 12. Overall, there was only slight difference across previous three years at each grade level when compared to the intervention year.

**Research question two.** The analysis of in-school suspension attendance and recidivism rates as compared across and between gender, race, socioeconomic status, academic failure, and disability classification of student subgroups found only one significant interaction effect between gender and repeat visits. Results indicated that males who received the intervention had fewer overall visits to in-school suspension than males who did not receive the intervention. Alternatively, the intervention was not found to have a statistically significant effect on females. Further analyses found that black students at the site school attended in-school suspension more often than white students. Additionally, students who experienced academic failure also attended in-school suspension more often than students who had not failed one or more class. Finally, students who received the intervention were assigned to in-school suspension less frequently overall. While these relationships were not found to be statistically significant, it is important still to note these correlations for planning and decision-making with regard to future program use and modifications.

Ultimately, when analyses controlled for differences in race, disability classification, socioeconomic status, and whether or not students failed one or more courses, it was found that these variables did not make a significant difference in how the intervention worked as these subgroups were affected the same. This should be considered an encouraging finding for the
disciplinary personnel at the site school considering that the goal for the in-school suspension setting is to implement behavioral interventions that will benefit the entire population of students in attendance.

**Research question three.** Focus group results related to the third research question addressed students', teachers', and administrators' overall perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention and its implementation into the in-school suspension program at the site school. The researcher used a combination of field notes, verbatim transcription, and thematic coding to identify themes in and among the participants' responses.

**Student focus group summary of findings.** Students across all grade levels and focus groups indicated a largely positive perception of Ripple Effects® for Teens and its impact on their classroom behavior; although, students did make recommendations for improvement of the program. Five concepts related to students' perception were explored and are summarized in this section:

- In-school suspension program;
- Ripple Effects® for Teens software program;
- Effect of Ripple Effects® for Teens software program on classroom behavior change;
- Most memorable or useful Ripple Effects® for Teens software program tutorials; and
- Improving Ripple Effects® for Teens.

**Students' perceptions of the in-school suspension program.** All students perceived in-school suspension to be an appropriate behavior consequence and stressed their preference of receiving in-school suspension over the alternative of out-of-school suspension. Students believed out-of-school suspension to be damaging to their academic progress by expressing their appreciation for being able to complete their class assignments during their visit(s) to in-school
suspension. Some students even shared that their class grades improved after attending in-school suspension because it was easier for them to complete their work in a structured and quiet environment; however, on the contrary, several students indicated an unappreciation for teachers who did not send class work when they were assigned to in-school suspension. Students also indicated that they believed out-of-school suspension to be damaging to their viewpoints toward school in general by pointing out that, "OSS frustrates you and makes you think that the school doesn't care because you get even more behind."

Students' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program on classroom behavior change. With regard to completing Ripple Effects® for Teens and how the program made students feel, most students indicated that the program was enjoyable and relevant to events taking place in their own lives. Most of the younger students also related future behavioral decisions back to what they learned from the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention. Several grade 11 and 12 students shared that they identified with the Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorials only because the material reinforced appropriate behaviors that they had already been taught in other settings (classroom and home).

It was revealed by one student that he believed the Ripple Effects® for Teens program to be the main contributor of his one-time visit to in-school suspension during the 2013 school year and justified his beliefs by comparing the current school year to his repeated visits to in-school suspension in previous years at the site school. Contrary to this ideal, a grade 12 student believed his advanced age prevented Ripple Effects® for Teens from having any effect on his future behavioral decisions. Several students discussed their abhorrence for the isolation and powerlessness to converse with other students and move freely about the in-school suspension room, and not the Ripple Effects® for Teens program, as the contributor of their behavior change.
Students' perceptions of the most memorable or useful Ripple Effects® for Teens program tutorials. The three program tutorials remembered and mentioned by students during the focused discussions were bullying, peer pressure, and talking back. In fact, when discussing the bullying tutorial, student participants indicated the need for making this tutorial available to other students in the school and not just to those students assigned to in-school suspension. Students went on to suggest ways of making this happen through reading, computer, or English classes or by airing the tutorial on the school's morning television announcements.

Students' perceptions of how the Ripple Effects® for Teens program could be improved. Program weaknesses were indicated by students' comments across all focus groups signifying that the student-directed program design of Ripple Effects® for Teens lacked a much-needed completion accountability component and blamed this for their long-term retention failure. Relatedly, students' communicated that the short time periods in which they were assigned to in-school suspension made them feel rushed to complete the tutorials thus affecting their retention of the strategies taught. When prompted on ideas for improvement of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program, students revealed an interest in having more modernized and up-to-date graphics and adding more real life scenarios to the tutorials. Specifically, students complained about the "old" feel of the program and the use of "cat and mouse" cartoon scenarios. Several students critiqued the maturity level of the program relaying that they would prefer to see more real life scenarios over the cartoon agents used throughout the tutorials. One student in particular expressed interest in seeing "real life" people having, and subsequently working through, an actual altercation.

Faculty focus group summary of findings. Faculty across both focus groups indicated conclusively a positive perception of in-school suspension and Ripple Effects® for Teens and its
impact on the classroom behavior of students. Three concepts related to teachers' perception were investigated and are reviewed in this section:

- In-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior;
- Ripple Effects® for Teens program and its impact on student behavior; and
- Improving in-school suspension.

Teachers' perceptions of the in-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior. Teachers across both focus groups shared in the opinion of in-school suspension being a more appropriate behavior consequence than out-of-school suspension because students are remaining in the school environment and completing class work assignments. The belief that in-school suspension increases accountability for students and teachers alike was shared across both focused discussions. Particularly, teachers discussed how the in-school suspension program at the site school holds teachers accountable for sending class assignments to students therefore holding students accountable for completing those assignments. Interestingly and perhaps pointing toward classroom and instructional management weaknesses, teachers also spoke about the fact that students who would typically do nothing for them in the classroom would actually complete class work within the in-school suspension environment. Overall, teachers across both groups indicated appreciation for in-school suspension with regard to this increased academic accountability for students.

In addition to the positives, teachers also discussed their concerns with the in-school suspension program. Specifically, one teacher talked about how students returning from in-school suspension were sometimes unable to comprehend the material being taught in class because of missing whole group instruction while away from the classroom. This reiterates the importance of reducing student behavioral offenses as a whole in order to increase classroom
instructional time. Another teacher followed this comment by sharing that some teachers do not send class work at all to students assigned to in-school suspension. Similarly, students also complained about not receiving class work from some of their teachers while attending in-school suspension, providing support for increased communication between the in-school suspension educator and teachers and increased involvement by teachers with the in-school suspension program.

It was also revealed that teachers consider in-school suspension to be an inappropriate consequence in some incidences. One teacher, followed by several others in agreement, indicated that in-school suspension assignments should "fit the crime" by giving an example of a student who repeatedly skipped her class and was given in-school suspension as a behavior consequence which in turn caused the student to miss out on even more class instruction. Teachers also had the opinion that in-school suspension should not be used with students who repeatedly break the rules by conveying that "if they [repeat offender students] keep ending up in ISS, then ISS is not working for them". These viewpoints further indicate the importance of providing individualized interventions to at-risk students through in-school suspension.

*Teachers' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program as a curriculum for in-school suspension students and its impact on student behavior.* Teachers believed Ripple Effects® for Teens, used in combination with in-school suspension, to be a deterrent to poor classroom behavior. Teachers went even further to say that they perceived students to go a longer period of time without reoffending once the student participated in the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention. One teacher in particular noted that she "never had a student that went right back to ISS" during the 2013 school year. Teachers also shared numerous examples of their experiences when dealing with students who returned from in-school suspension. Specifically,
teachers observed that students were more reflective of “right from wrong”; students appeared “nicer”; students were accepting of compliments and had more polite attitudes; and students followed teacher directives without “blowing up”.

*Teachers’ perceptions of how the in-school suspension program could be improved.* It was important to give teacher participants a voice with regard to how the program at the site school could be improved. Teachers believed that communication between the administrative deans and teachers should be increased in order for the teacher to know why the student has been assigned to in-school suspension. Their reasoning behind this suggestion is sound; teachers would like to know the student’s behavioral offense that caused the student to be placed into in-school suspension so that those behaviors can be addressed by them in their own classrooms. In other words, a more proactive approach was suggested. Another teacher made the suggestion of communicating with specific in-school suspension students’ teachers (and not only administrative deans) in order to create a system of support in managing difficult students. An additional area that teachers discussed and agreed upon was the importance of teaching replacement behaviors in classrooms and not only within the in-school suspension environment. Again, all of these revelations speak to the need for changes in the way classrooms are being managed.

*Administrative focus group summary of findings.* Administrative members indicated an unquestionably positive perception of in-school suspension and Ripple Effects® for Teens and program impact on student behavior. Three concepts related to administrators’ perception were investigated and are reviewed in this section:

- In-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior;
- Ripple Effects® for Teens program and its impact on student behavior; and
• Improving in-school suspension.

Administrators' perceptions of the in-school suspension program and its impact on student behavior. Administrative participants also discussed in-school suspension to be a more appropriate behavior consequence than out-of-school suspension specifically pointing out the limitless option of using it with all students in the school to include exceptional education students. One member of the administrative team specifically mentioned how in-school suspension provides special education students with a behavioral consequence that allows students to catch up on work that they may need extended time on.

The principal of the site school went on to stress the importance of appropriately staffing an in-school suspension program with an individual who is capable of implementing and administering the necessary components of in-school suspension with fidelity to include bringing classroom teachers on board with the program. The behavior coach followed this idea up with the necessity of the in-school suspension coordinator possessing an exceptional student education certification so that those students “are getting that help that they need” by a qualified educator.

Administrators' perceptions of the Ripple Effects® for Teens program as a curriculum for in-school suspension students and its impact on student behavior. The participants discussed their appreciation for having an in-school suspension program equipped with a behavioral intervention curriculum, pointing out how the program at the site school is different than many others in this regard. Additionally, administrators discussed the differences they have seen with individual students and throughout the school since the implementation of Ripple Effects® for Teens. The principal and behavior coach both shared specific interactions during the focused discussions describing how students, during separate occasions, indicated to them that Ripple
Effects® for Teens kept them focused and on task when attending in-school suspension and helped them learn how to better make decisions from watching the tutorial videos. The assistant principal followed up on this topic by discussing how he had received comments from community members outside of the school about how polite and helpful students were to them when they visited the school campus, and he related this to the “direct result of the policies we've put in place as far as ISS and Ripple Effects”.

Administrators’ perceptions of how the in-school suspension program could be improved.

Administrators discussed the need for a stronger focus on remediating the behaviors of the repeat offender students by providing additional Tier II and Tier III interventions to this at-risk population through the in-school suspension program. It was suggested by one participant that there be a parental involvement component in order to educate parents by getting them involved in changing the behaviors of those repeat offender students. Overall, administrators recognize that there is still work to be done at the site school as far as remediating the behaviors of repeat offender students. This idea is in agreement with both students’ and teachers’ responses as it is evident to all parties that repeat offenses still remain an issue despite the integration of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention into the in-school suspension program.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

Social learning was selected as the theoretical framework for this study as it provided an informative lens through which to better understand the effects of a computer-based behavioral intervention on student behavior. Phase one of this study measured quantitatively the effects of a computer-based intervention on student behavior taking into consideration the principles of observational learning. The ultimate goal of incorporating Ripple Effects® for Teens into the in-school suspension program was to provide students with tools to improve their classroom
behaviors to the point of reducing in-school suspension visits, specifically repeated visits by the same students. The results of phase one showed a significant decrease in the repeat offenses of 9th grade in-school suspension students across all years and significance within one year of 10th grade in-school suspension students. Through the focused discussions conducted after the data was analyzed in phase one, students' demonstrated the manner in which Ripple Effects® for Teens made them feel by speaking to retention of the curriculum presented and relevancy of the behavioral tutorials to their own lives.

For example, a grade 10 female student with only one visit to in-school suspension during 2013 shared that:

It was fun to me 'cause (sic) when you're in ISS, you can't really do anything. I was on the computer playing the games on the little things [Ripple Effects tutorials], but at the same time it was teaching me responsibility.

Another grade nine female student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension shared a powerful revelation when she commented:

I say it [Ripple Effects] was good because I learned more stuff about what other people be [sic] going through. I heard their side of the story and it made me feel like, "Dang, I thought I had a messed up life, but their life is messed up. I'll have this life I got [sic] now than to have their life and get raped, beat, and stuff. I'd rather have this life."

Lastly, a grade 10 male student with repeat offenses to in-school suspension shared that he, "liked it and the stories they [Ripple Effects] tell...yeah, it relates to something that might occur in my life."
These statements by 9th and 10th grade students who had both single and repeated visits to in-school suspension support the use of observational learning as an effective method for delivering behavioral interventions through a software-based program to students attending in-school suspension. Particularly, Ripple Effects® for Teens uses all components of observational learning through live, verbal instructional, and symbolic presentations throughout the software-based behavioral tutorials that the students were assigned to work on. Bandura (as cited in Miller, 2011) asserted that observational learning can be used as a therapy for problem behaviors because it occurs by "acquiring information from other people, books, and electronic media" (p. 235-239) which are the specific methods used to present the behavioral curriculum in the Ripple Effects® for Teens software.

By following phase one with a focus group component in phase two, the researcher was able to examine the results between the different grade levels in greater detail to determine, based on student perception, why the intervention had a greater effect on the behaviors of 9th and 10th grade students when compared to the 11th and 12th grade students. It was found that despite the comments from younger students indicating that they did relate the strategies and tutorials from Ripple Effects® for Teens to their own lives, the older students did not convey this same perception. Specifically, one male student in the 12th grade with repeated visits to in-school suspension stated:

At my age, that program is not going to affect my life any. If you tell me I gotta [sic] do it to get out of ISS, I'm gonna [sic] do whatever I gotta [sic] do to get out.

I mean, it's pointless to me, to tell ya [sic] the truth.

This comment speaks to the reinforcement and reproduction components of observational learning and to this student's self-efficacy. In other words, it does not appear that the software
had the same effect on this older student; additionally, this student does not believe any future behavioral decisions he makes will be based on anything acquired from the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention.

The qualitative approach to this problem of practice was also taken to explore student self-efficacy. Bandura discussed self-efficacy to be a person’s awareness of their own ability in managing their environment and retaining authority over events that influence their lives (as cited in Miller, 2011). Phase two was designed using focus group discussions that brought forth students' insights into what they perceived to be the change, if any, in their behavior after completion of Ripple Effects® for Teens and whether or not they correlated that change to the intervention. In other words, the researcher wanted to bring to light whether or not students believed that they were more capable of managing their behaviors after completing the intervention and returning to the classroom environment thus demonstrating an effect on student self-efficacy. It was evident through the focused discussions that Ripple Effects® for Teens had some effect on the self-efficacy of students. For example, one grade ten male student with repeated visits to in-school suspension commented that Ripple Effects® for Teens:

Shows you how to go beyond some types of decisions in your life. Like, if you have an altercation with somebody, it shows you the way of how to avoid the altercation by walking away and not saying nothing (sic) about it or saying anything to that person.

Another grade nine female student with repeated visits to in-school suspension indicated that the program made her feel, "Like, when something else is going on, I could use that [Ripple Effects] instead of doing what I did; you know, acknowledge my mistakes." This same participant went on to say:
Yeah, on there [Ripple Effects], when they say, "go with your first mind" about certain stuff, like when I wanted to do something bad, but my first mind told me, "don't do it", and my second mind told me, "do it"...I went with my first mind, and I didn't get in trouble.

A male student in the 11th grade discussing his one-time visit to in-school suspension during 2013 directly linked this to Ripple Effects® for Teens and its effect on his classroom behavior when he stated:

I think, yeah, because I haven't been back [to ISS] since after the Ripple Effects. I remember last year we didn't have it [Ripple Effects in ISS] and I went back like twice, but this year I've only been to ISS one time, so I think it did.

These examples demonstrate increased awareness and self-efficacy by revealing how these students not only retained the strategies presented in the Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorials, but also how each exercised control over decision-making by identifying with or implementing the strategies learned.

**Summary of theoretical framework in relation to the findings.** Social learning is “the process in which individuals observe the behavior of others and its consequences, and modify their own behavior accordingly” (Ganis, 2009, p. 2). Bandura conceived learning through observation to be comprised of four key elements: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Moreover, Bandura (as cited in Miller, 2011) asserted that it is through a combination of these elements that an individual’s behavior can be changed and proposed three models through which observational learning could take place: live (peers, teachers, and coaches), verbal instructional (descriptions or explanations of a behavior), and symbolic (real or fictional characters modeling behaviors in books, movies, or online media). Self-efficacy,
another component of Bandura's social learning theory, was used as a guide for understanding students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perspectives of the effects of the intervention on student behavior.

This framework was most fitting because the in-school suspension program and Ripple Effects®, for Teens intervention evaluated in this study envelops all of these characteristics. Based on the tenets of observational learning, in order for the intervention to have had an effect, students would have to be attentive to the curriculum, retain the behavioral strategies taught, and be motivated to reproduce those strategies when presented with future opportunities to do so. The quantitative results in this study substantiate observational learning methods delivered by means of software-based curriculum to be effective as measured by a statistically significant reduction in the repeat offender occurrences of in-school suspension students in grade nine. In addition to the results in phase one, the focused discussions furthered understanding by giving students a voice to share what they believed themselves to be capable of after completion of the Ripple Effects® for Teens tutorials and returning to the regular classroom environment.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature Review**

This section will discuss the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two of this study, to include three key areas:

- Purposes and components of successful in-school suspension programs;
- Behavioral components of Response to Intervention in a high school; and
- Use of individualized computer-based behavioral interventions.

**In-school suspension.** The literature reviewed offered several solid examples of in-school suspension programs and discussed what a successfully implemented program entails (Hochman & Worner, 1987; Short, 1988; Sheets, 1996). Moreover, the literature showed the
primary importance in the development of in-school suspension to be a research-based behavioral intervention component that can provide students with individualized instruction based on the behavioral offense that resulted in the assignment to in-school suspension (Michail, 2011; Morris & Howard, 2003). The importance of this element to the current study is noteworthy because the in-school suspension program that is the subject of this study was not structured to include a research-based behavioral intervention component prior to the study year. This study, however, integrated that component into the site school’s program and measured its effects. The results of phase one of this study aligns with what prior research has asserted about the effectiveness of in-school suspension when combined with a behavioral intervention component by demonstrating a statistically significant decrease in student in-school suspension recidivism rates during the intervention year. Furthermore, student, faculty, and administrative perception corresponds with prior research by supporting the idea that in-school suspension is a more appropriate and favorable consequence than out-of-school suspension for academic and social reasons (Morris & Howard, 2003; Allman & Slate, 2011; Simonsen et al., 2011).

Response to intervention. There is a large amount of research on RtI implementation and research-based interventions at the elementary level; however, research is lacking on RtI processes and acceptable tiered behavioral interventions that can be used with secondary level students (Utley and Obiakor, 2012; Gresham et al., 2013). This gap in the body of literature validated the need for the current study as it has provided a deeper look into the effectiveness of an intensive evidenced-based behavioral intervention at the high school level that can be individualized to student needs. What is more, the findings in the current study not only promote using in-school suspension integrated with a research-based behavioral curriculum as an acceptable intervention for high school students, but it also shows how in-school suspension can
serve as an appropriate intervention component within an RtI behavioral model by allowing in-school suspension supervisory personnel to early identify students who may be at risk for more serious or repeated behavioral offenses (Walker, 2010; Hazelkorn et al., 2010).

One RtI study reviewed in the literature found students more likely to respond to social skills interventions during transitory periods (January et al., 2011). The results of the current study align with this earlier finding by revealing the most significant effect to be with the 9th grade students who most recently transitioned into high school. This same study also discussed the time frame of the intervention to be critical in effectiveness (January et al., 2011). A previous report by Wilson and Lipsey (2007) identified only slight change or no improvement at all in studies where students were exposed to the intervention for a limited amount of time. Because students in the current study were assigned to in-school suspension for a period of one to five days, the brief exposure to the Ripple Effects® for Teens could very well be a factor in why significant reduction in repeat occurrences of in-school suspension was not found across all grade levels.

**Computer-based behavioral interventions.** The literature reviewed in Chapter II also revealed cost to be a factor in purchasing evidenced-based behavioral interventions for RtI models in high schools (Utley & Obiakor, 2012; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2007); however, further review revealed the use of technology to be a potential solution to this economical dilemma (Marino & Beecher, 2010; Smith & Okolo, 2010; Fox, 2009). Not only is technology-based learning affordable, several studies revealed that this method provides educators with a way to customize curriculum to individual student needs (Basham et al., 2010; Smith & Okolo, 2010; Rose & Meyer, 2002). This literature served as an especially important component in selecting the intervention for the
current study since participants consisted of both regular education and exceptional education students who were assigned to in-school suspension for a variety of behavioral reasons.

Prior studies by Smith and Okolo (2010) and Gresham et al., (2004) revealed technology-delivered instruction to be more successful in remediating skills that have previously been taught, which was the intended goal of the intervention component in the current study. The researcher in this study created a uniform lesson plan consisting of 20 different behavioral topics based on what previous school disciplinary data revealed to be the greatest problem behaviors occurring in classrooms at the site school. The goal was to remediate these previously taught social behaviors through the use of the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum. This study coincides with prior findings as it was revealed through students' focused discussions that many of the tutorial topics reinforced what students had already been taught outside of in-school suspension.

Ripple Effects® for Teens was chosen by site school leaders and in-school suspension coordinator in the current study because of its affordability, ease of implementation, ease of use, and because of the vast array of behavioral topics that could be assigned to students on an as-needed basis. Of the four unpublished Ripple Effects® for Teens studies relating directly to high school implementation previously reviewed in Chapter II, none soundly measured its effectiveness on the recidivism rates of in-school suspension students nor were student, faculty, and administrative perspective of the intervention's effects on student behavior explored. The results of the current study fill this gap in the literature by providing a reliable evaluation of the effects as implemented as a single intervention in a high school in-school suspension setting. By using baseline data, the researcher was able to make comparisons to the recidivism rates of students before and after receiving the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention. Overall, the
review of literature validates the worth of the current study by supporting its relevancy to the topic of RtI and behavioral intervention supports for at-risk students at the secondary level.

**Summary of the literature review in relation to the findings.** A review of prior research related to the problem of practice in this study establishes the need for and promotes the use of in-school suspension programs as a behavioral consequence appropriate for use with all students within a school’s population. The literature reviewed in this study shows that in order for these programs to be considered most effective, school disciplinarians must equip the programs with research-based behavioral interventions with the objective of remediating student behavioral problems before returning students to the traditional classroom environment. However, literature also showed that many in-school suspension programs still lack this behavior remediation component (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). Education leaders have reported this to be a difficult element to implement because of a lack of funding to purchase intervention curriculum. Furthermore, there are structural and scheduling challenges that prevent in-school suspension teachers from individualizing the curriculum for students.

With a push from the IDEA in 2004 toward the use of early intervening systems (also referred to in the literature as RtI), schools have developed tiered behavioral intervention models targeting various levels from universal (school-wide) to intensive, based on student needs. Because RtI is meant to provide at-risk students with intensive interventions, the researcher in this study believes that the in-school suspension environment provides high school disciplinary personnel with an ideal opportunity to deliver individualized behavioral interventions to students. However, prior research has identified economical challenges that make it unfeasible to staff in-school suspension programs with more than one teaching unit hence creating a road block to delivery of one-on-one behavioral interventions to large groups of students. The literature on RtI
interventions did conclude however that technology-based curriculum might be the very answer to school disciplinarians’ woes concerning this dilemma (Chambers, 2008).

Furthermore, literature revealed technology to be a favorite learning mechanism of today’s high school student (Smith & Okolo, 2010; Rideout et al., 2010; Lenhart et al., 2007); unfortunately, it was also revealed that technology-based learning tools are not being used as prevalently in today’s schools as they could be (Smith and Okolo, 2010). The findings in the current study support the increased use of technology in delivering behavioral intervention supports to students by demonstrating a positive student response to the intervention as implemented within the in-school suspension program at the site school. Additionally, statistically significant reductions in repeat visits to in-school suspension by ninth grade students revealed the Ripple Effects® for Teens curriculum to be effective in remediating the behaviors of these at-risk students at the site school.

Validity and Limitations

Maintaining validity and reliability in mixed-methods evaluation research can be accomplished by giving appropriate considerations to statistical conclusion, internal, and external validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979). While validity was discussed in detail in Chapter III, this section provides further analysis of threats as well as limitations of this study.

Statistical conclusion validity addresses whether the cause (the intervention) and the effect (the outcome) are interconnected (Farrington, 2003). Farrington (2003) discussed the main threats to statistical conclusion to be insufficient statistical power to detect the effect and the use of too many statistical tests in data analysis. In order to address this threat, the researcher in the current study used three years of secondary data to establish a baseline. Because the current study used only one group during the intervention year, determining whether the
intervention really did cause a change in the outcome was addressed by using this baseline data to make a comparison to the intervention year. This created an effect size that was rather large, consisting of 1,154 students overall. This effect size was broken down even further to address the internal maturation validity threat by analyzing the data by grade level groups over a period of four years. Furthermore, the researcher used a limited number of relevant statistical testing methods to analyze and interpret the phase one data of this study.

Personal bias must also be considered a threat to validity considering the level of researcher involvement in this study due to the researcher’s position as the in-suspension coordinator within the site school and moderator of the focused discussions in this study. The researcher took this connection into consideration when constructing the protocol for the focused discussions and was cautious to avoid the use of leading questions that could have prejudiced participants’ responses in any way. Moreover, because the focus group participants had a previously established professional relationship with the researcher, participants at various times during the focused discussions were tempted to stray off topic to discuss other school personnel or disciplinary policies or procedures. When necessary, the researcher would reiterate the question or prompt in order to redirect participant concentration back to the discussion content.

Another validity threat considered in this study was the reactivity of participants to the researcher as focus group moderator. Reactivity occurs when a study participant is influenced by the researcher carrying out the study in a ways that alter what is being measured (Lavrakas, 2008). Because the focused questions had to do with participants’ perception, it is possible that participants’ avoided communicating the full extent of their opinion of the intervention because of this previously established moderator/participant relationship. This threat was addressed through collection of field notes, recordings, and verbatim transcription of all six focus group
sessions, and the transcripts were then compared back to the recordings to assure accuracy. Although these obligatory steps were taken, it was not possible to completely eliminate this as a threat to the study thus also making it a limitation. In order to address this limitation, the researcher adhered to the ethical standards of the American Educational Research Association (2011) guidelines governing research involving dual relationships by taking particular care through the informed consent process to assure that participants’ consent to participate was voluntary and free of coercion.

Another limitation of this study, as mentioned in Chapter III, is its lack of generalizability to other schools and populations. Because all in-school suspension programs are not structured and staffed in the same manner, it would be difficult to imitate precisely the in-school suspension program and subsequent Ripple Effects® for Teens implementation as was done at the site school in the current study. As the results in this study showed, the implementation and success of the intervention relies heavily on the environment in which the program is put into practice. Contrary to this limitation, this study does provide a successfully designed and implemented in-school suspension model, and other schools could consider this documented model to create new in-school suspension programs or to strengthen existing programs within their schools and districts. Furthermore, it is not possible to replicate the opinions and perspectives of the student, faculty, and administrative participants with regard to the in-school suspension program and Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention as implemented at the site school; therefore, this study overall cannot be generalized to other schools or populations.

Conclusion

Educational scholars, behavioral theorists, district and school leaders, and teachers for more than four decades have noted classroom disciplinary concerns and have searched for
solutions to improving the social behaviors of students. However, there still exists a very real problem in the classrooms of today’s public high schools, which requires school disciplinarians to look for supplementary ways of remediating the behavior of students. Through review of prior literature, it was discovered that funding and staffing challenges deter school leaders from implementing with fidelity interventions that could potentially address these concerns. This study evaluated the effectiveness of an affordable software-based behavioral intervention program implemented as a tiered RtI intervention into the in-school suspension program of a public high school. Pertinent to this study specifically is how the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention significantly impacted the recidivism rates of in-school suspension students. Consistent with prior literature discussing the highest rates of behavior change being during the transitional years, results indicated that the recidivism rates of the younger students in grades nine reduced significantly while the recidivism rates of the older students in grades 10, 11, and 12 held steady to previous years.

Based on the statistical analysis of the student in-school suspension recidivism rates, it was equally important to obtain participant viewpoints of these effects. Specifically, the researcher acquired student, faculty, and administrative perceptions of the effectiveness of the intervention on student behavior through focused discussions. Examining these results through the framework of social learning theory confirmed that observational learning methods are indeed an effective means of delivering behavioral interventions to students through a computer-based curriculum implemented within an in-school suspension environment. Students, teachers, and administrative participants’ believed in-school suspension to be a more appropriate behavioral consequence than out-of-school suspension. Additionally, the participants’ perceived Ripple Effects® for Teens to be an effective addition to the in-school suspension program.
Moreover, through analysis of the students’ focused discussions, it was determined that student self-efficacy increased through use of Ripple Effects® for Teens as evidenced by students’ beliefs that the program provided them with a way to think about their classroom behavior before committing a classroom behavioral offense. Similarly, teachers and administrators reported a positive change in student behavior post in-school suspension visits and appreciated overall that students were receiving a positive behavioral intervention while attending in-school suspension.

**Significance of the study in the field.** With only a small amount of research focused on the evaluation of tiered RtI behavioral interventions at the high school level, this study reinforced the need for efficient and cost effective methods of delivery of these interventions to students. The effectiveness of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention on reducing repeated occurrences of in-school suspension is significant in that improving student behavior brings more potential to improving classroom instructional time thus increasing the academic achievement of students. This study shows that in-school suspension comprised of a computer-based social learning behavioral intervention component can successfully be used as a Tier II/III RtI intervention piece. The design of the in-school suspension program at the site school proves structure and behavioral intervention components to be critical to the successes of these programs. Additionally, using RtI to identify students who continue to struggle with classroom behavior even after having received the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention allows school disciplinary personnel to focus attention on these particular students by giving consideration to more intensive interventions to address inappropriate behaviors. Moreover, understanding how participants themselves perceived the effects of the intervention is critical for school leaders in making future modifications to program implementation and use at the site school.
**Recommendations for future research.** The findings in this study have confirmed the need for and continued use of in-school suspension as an alternative to the use of out-of-school suspension with high school students. While the use of the Ripple Effects® for Teens intervention implemented into the in-school suspension program in this study has proven effective in reducing student recidivism rates to in-school suspension for the younger high school population, there is still work to be done at the site school in that those repeat offenses have not been completely eliminated. Furthermore, the recidivism rates of the grades 10, 11, and 12 students did not appear to be significantly affected by the intervention component. The program needs to be enhanced in ways that will potentially get through to most of the students who attend in-school suspension. Student, teacher, and administrative perspective brought forth through the focused discussions offered suggestions for improvement based on participants’ own experiences with in-school suspension or Ripple Effects® for Teens; those suggestions should be taken into consideration by the site school leaders and disciplinary personnel when making future adjustments to the program.

Additionally, lack of funding for the purchase of research-based interventions appears to be a deterrent to improving in-school suspension programs in high schools; however, a possible solution to this seems to be implementation of interventions through early intervening systems that can be paid for in part by IDEA Part B federal funds. Because in-school suspension can be used as an intervention component within RtI models as a way of identifying students who may be at-risk and in need of additional behavioral supports, it is only logical to look further into the dedicated (and undedicated) use of this funding toward successful integration of RtI academic and behavioral programs at the secondary level. Moreover, the possibility of disciplinary action disproportionality should be considered by all schools and all states should look closer at
mandating the use of Part B funding for the implementation of early intervening services and evidence-based interventions such as in the current study. This study also revealed a higher number of ninth grade students assigned to in-school suspension indicating a need for a closer look at the eighth to ninth grade disciplinary transitioning practices being used within the middle schools and high schools within the district.

Lastly, responses by student focus group participants that had both repeated and one-time visits to in-school suspension during the intervention year revealed that students considered the structured and distraction-free environment of the in-school suspension classroom in this study to be a more likely place to successfully complete class work assignments when compared to the traditional classroom itself. This revelation was later substantiated by teacher focus group participants when some shared that students who characteristically failed to complete assignments for them in the classroom would in fact complete their class work when assigned to in-school suspension thus resulting in improved classroom grades of those students.

Furthermore, it was made known during the administrative focused discussion that students had actually requested in-school suspension as a behavior consequence because students believed that they would be more likely to get caught up academically if they were placed there versus being given any other behavior consequence. The researcher in this study believes that profound consideration should be given to this concept as it indicates possible inadequacies with instructional and behavioral management practices in classrooms within the site school which could be an impediment to the academic and social advancement of its students.

**Personal Reflection**

My interest in the social interactions of people began early on in my career as a criminal defense paralegal. It was through this work that I was immersed into a population of people who
were regularly under extreme duress or constant worry and who, in some cases, identified themselves to be a failure to some extent. I found it fascinating to watch the interactions of the clients with their own families and with the middle to upper class individuals working within the legal community. This interest grew when I transitioned into education and began teaching reading to struggling high school students in an urban school community. Teaching a subject that was considered remedial and one that enrolled only those students performing below grade level, I was met again with a population of people who identified with some degree of failure. I then also began to take notice of the daily interactions between other teachers and the academically at-risk students that they taught, and I quickly realized a desire to change the focus of my educational career in order to examine more closely these interactions. After completing five years of successful classroom teaching, I found myself fortunate to be situated within a behavioral coaching position in an urban high school that provided me with access to look directly at student interactions with and among members of the school community. Subsequent work through the doctoral program at Northeastern University has provided me with the knowledge and tools to explore this interest in a scholarly way.

The findings in this study show that there still exists an exorbitant number of repeat behavioral offenses by students attending in-school suspension despite the use of an evidence-based behavioral intervention. Because of this, I believe there are areas other than student behavior modification that are worth exploring from a sociological standpoint. Specifically, conducting a micro-interactional level of analysis at the site school would provide a way of looking at the interactions and exchanges of students and teachers involved in classroom activities in order to better understand why this school may not be working as well as it could (Brint, 2006). Educational sociologists find micro-interactional analysis to be especially
important for exploring how effective teachers administer their classroom authority and create productive learning environments; additionally, this type of analysis also provides a way of investigating less apparent reasons of academic unproductivity and behavioral discord visible in so many of today’s urban classrooms (Brint, 2006).

The foundation of classroom interaction is based on the experiences that students and teachers carry with them to the classroom, and also relevant are the preexisting understandings that each has for the other (Brint, 2006). How teachers interpret the social and ethnic cultural cues of students is critical to how teachers develop classroom expectations and how those expectations may influence student behavior. Because schools in the United States are structured to deliver curriculum to students and to subsequently determine which of those students are academically successful, teachers must attempt to enforce rules and procedures in classrooms by socializing the acceptance of their authority (Brint, 2006). However, urban high school students today have a special culture characterized by their dress, entertainment choices, and unique language, and studies show that middle-class teachers may tend to alienate themselves and the knowledge they represent from the urban students who are heavily influenced by the cultural elements of their age group (Brint, 2006; Alpert, 1991). The outcome of student acceptance of the teacher’s authority largely depends on the teacher’s attitude in relation to the student (Brint, 2006; Filloux, 1993). When teachers and students do not meet in the middle, a gap is created within the teacher’s emphasis on academic studies and the student’s culture, thus causing students to resist the classroom rules that teachers attempt to enforce (Brint, 2006; Ducharme & Shecter, 2011).

Previous literature indicates that teacher preparation and training programs do not prepare teachers for managing the urban classroom (Brint, 2006; Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Michail,
2011), and this has the potential to create detriment to student learning and behavioral development considering that “teachers are central to the flow of student energy and attention during class” (Brint, 2006, p. 24). It appears that many school leaders and teachers today are focusing intently on interventions to assist in remediating poor student behavior; however, the greater focus should be on a complete view of the problem. To change the negative behavioral aspects within a school’s culture, there has to be an awareness of why the undesired behaviors are occurring and a willingness to promote not only student behavioral transformation, but teacher transformation as well. Starting with a micro-interactional level of analysis of the interactions taking place between students and teachers at the site school will illuminate intercommunication strengths and weaknesses and will provide school leaders with a foundation for stimulating that needed transformation.
References


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School Mental Health Analysis and Action (CSMHA), University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore.


Appendix A
District Approval Letter

July 26, 2012

Ms. Rosie Cooper

Dear Ms. Cooper:

Please be advised that your request to conduct research on In-School Suspension at High School has been approved. It is our understanding that your research methods will include a study of “Evaluation of the Effects of Web-Based Behavior Training Software on the Behavior of In-School Suspension Students.”

In that your research has received approval through the district, we ask that once complete, you provide us with a copy of any information which would be potentially beneficial to our students and staff.

Should you require any further assistance, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Deputy Superintendent

Enclosure
Appendix B
Site School Approval Letter

October 30, 2012

Ms. Rosie N. Cooper

Dear Ms. Cooper,

Please be advised that your request to conduct research on the In-School Suspension program and student and staff perceptions of disciplinary practices at High School have been approved. It is my understanding that your research methods will include a study of the “Evaluation of the Effects of Computer-Based Behavior Training Software on the Behavior of In-School Suspension Students.”

For the purposes of your study, you are hereby granted permission to access student grades, test scores, disciplinary records, and any other records maintained by the school that you may need for data analyses and reporting purposes. Please be advised that if you intend to utilize student or staff interviewing or focus group techniques, informed consent must be obtained from the participants. Lastly, all student or staff identifiers (student or staff names and district student or staff identification numbers) must be kept confidential to protect the identities of all participants of this research study.

I ask that once complete, you provide me with a copy of any information which could potentially be beneficial to our students and staff.

Sincerely,

Principal
### Appendix C
In-School Suspension Lesson Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Topic</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Teacher Signature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Styles</td>
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<td>Temperament</td>
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<td>Dress Code</td>
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<td>Respect – Getting It</td>
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<td>Respect – Showing</td>
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<td>Authority – Defying</td>
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<td>Boundaries</td>
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<td>Courtesy</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<td>Talking Back</td>
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<td>Compliments–Giving</td>
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<td>Compliments–Receiving</td>
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<td>Conflict with Teacher</td>
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<td>Tardy</td>
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<td>Cultural Differences</td>
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<td>Bad Decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Background</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION ORIENTATION

Mrs. R. Cooper
2012-2013

SEATING & MATERIALS

- Seating is assigned by Mrs. Cooper
- Please remain in the same seat for the duration of your in-school suspension assignment unless Mrs. Cooper moves you
- Please bring paper, pen/pencil, and all textbooks to ISS

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- Must be placed inside cabinets along back of classroom: purses, backpacks, cell phones, iPods, etc.
- You should keep: paper, pen/pencil, textbooks, folders at your desk. Please place these items in the basket under your desk when you are not using them. Please do not leave items on the floor in the aisles
ISS EXPECTATIONS

- **BE SILENT.** Talking and/or non-verbal communication with other students is prohibited
- **BE AWAKE.** Putting your head down and/or sleeping is prohibited
- **BE ON-TASK.** Working on non-academic related activities is prohibited
- **BE COMPLIANT WITH SCHOOL-WIDE EXPECTATIONS & STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES HANDBOOK.** Dress code violations, tardies, use of profanity, open-defiance, cheating, eating/drinking in class, misuse of technology (cell phones, iPods, headphones, computers, etc.) are prohibited

ISS PROCEDURES

- All students participate in the *Ripple Effects* program
- All students work on teacher assignments (your teachers have already been notified of your ISS assignment). Completed teacher assignments should have your name and your teacher’s name clearly labeled at the top. Be sure to place in basket for delivery to your teacher. If teacher assignments have not been received, students will work on ISS assignments from Mrs. Cooper
- If you are caught on your cell phone or it alerts in class, it will be taken and turned into the dean’s office where your parent will then have to retrieve it
- Five minute Restroom/Water Breaks will occur at 9:35, 11:10, and 2:20. All students will be escorted to the Atrium; vending items are not allowed during this time
ISS LUNCH PROCEDURES
• All students will be escorted to the lunchroom at 11:10 a.m. Students will retrieve lunch items available inside the Cafeteria in a quick and efficient manner
• All students will eat in the ISS-designated lunch seating on the Cafeteria’s stage
• All students will remain seated until teacher arrives to escort students back to ISS; all students will return through the Cafeteria door entryway
• EARLY RELEASE INCENTIVE—Students without rule violation point(s) during the 4th/5th block will qualify for early release at 3:00 p.m.
• Any student with rule violation point(s) during the 4th/5th block will remain until the 3:05 bell

ITEMS TO REMEMBER
• Supplies are available on the back counter (stapler, tape, colored pencils, hole punch, rulers, calculators, paper, soap/paper towels, tissue, etc.); you may help yourself to these items, but there should never be more than one person out of their seat at a time
• You are never permitted to have a pass out of ISS to locker, library, another teacher, guidance, etc.; please do not ask
• Computers are strictly monitored through LanSchool and computer privileges will be taken away for violations
• Utilize the Restroom breaks; you will not be permitted to leave at any other time (unless there is an emergency)
• You may go to the Clinic if you are experiencing an emergency
• If you check in after 2nd period or checkout before 6th, the ISS day does not count toward your assigned days
ISS RULE VIOLATION POINT SYSTEM

- “Rule Violation Points” are received for rules violations and lowers your daily ISS grade
  - 0 points = 100%
  - 1 point = 90%
  - 2 points = 80%
  - 3 points = 70%
  - 4 points = 60%
  - 5 points = ISS converted to OSS (out-of-school suspension)
- Once you receive a rule violation point, it does not go away and points do not “start over” on a new day
- If you receive five points during the duration of your ISS assignment, your remaining ISS will be converted to out-of-school suspension

*EARLY RELEASE INCENTIVE*

- If you do not receive rules violation points, you will receive an early release from ISS
  - Example: If you were given three days of ISS and you do not have any rules violation points at the end of your second day, you will not be required to serve the third day of ISS
  - Example: If you were given three days of ISS and you arrive tardy on your second day of ISS, you will receive a rule violation point resulting in the loss of qualifying for the Early Release Incentive. In this type of situation, you will end up staying for the entire three days you were assigned
**SCHEDULE**

- **8:30-9:30**—1st PERIOD—ISS Orientation & Ripple Effects overview
- **9:34-10:24**—2nd PERIOD—Work on Ripple Effects assignment
  - **9:35**—Restroom/Water Break
- **10:28-11:18**—3rd PERIOD—Work on Ripple Effects assignment
  - **11:10**—LUNCH / Restroom Break
- **11:22-1:17**—4th PERIOD—Continue working on Ripple Effects or teacher assignments; computer time permitted, if needed
- **1:21-2:11**—6th PERIOD—Continue working on Ripple Effects or teacher assignments; computer time permitted, if needed
  - **2:05**—Restroom/Water Break
- **2:15-3:05**—7th PERIOD—Finish Ripple Effect or ISS assignments; computer time permitted, if needed; turn in all work
  - **2:55**—Room clean-up and retrieve personal belongings
  - **3:00**—Early release for students without rule violation points
  - **3:05**—Release for all students

---

**RIPPLE EFFECTS®**

Mrs. R. Cooper  
2012-2013
SIGNING ON TO YOUR COMPUTER

- You need: writing utensil, headphones (you may use your own if you have them; you will be provided with a set if you do not)
- Sign on to your assigned student computer using your student number and password (date of birth)
- Wait for the Novell box to load; this may take a few minutes:

RIPPLE EFFECTS
Software to positively change behavior

- Be sure your headphones are plugged in

- Locate the Ripple Effects® icon and double click on the icon to start the program:
LOGGING IN TO YOUR ACCOUNT

- When the program loads, you will click on the “First Time” login icon on the left and create your account by entering your (legal) first and last name.
- Your password will be: **hs2012**
- On the next screen, you will be directed to re-enter your name and password.
- On the next screen (blue with yellow writing), you will click on the blue “okay” button.
- You will then be taken to a confirmation screen confirming that you have logged in correctly. Here you will be prompted to select your gender. Please select the one that applies to you and click on “now go.”

SELECTING YOUR TUTORIALS

- Locate and click on the icon at the top left of the screen.
- Next a cell phone full of topics will appear:
- Click on the “L” button on the phone and select “Learning Styles.”
- The Learning Styles tutorial will appear.
WORKING THROUGH TUTORIALS

• Navigating the Tutorials

ISS LESSON PLAN

• You must track your progress on the ISS Lesson Plan and have the teacher sign off on the lessons you complete
ASSIGNED TOPICS

- “L” for Learning styles
- “T” for Temperament
- “D” for Dress Code
- “R” for Respect-getting it
- “R” for Respect-showing
- “A” for Authority-defying
- “B” for Boundaries
- “C” for Courtesy
- “S” for Swearing
- “B” for Bullying
- “I” for Internet Harassment
- “C” for Communication Skills
- “T” for Talking back
- “C” for Compliments – giving
- “C” for Compliments – receiving
- “C” for Conflict with Teacher
- “T” for Tardy
- “C” for Cultural differences
- “B” for Bad Decisions
- “F” for Family Background

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF RIPPLE EFFECTS®!

- *Ripple Effects* is not optional; all students in ISS are required to work on this program
- You must complete all portions of the tutorial you are working in, including answering questions
- You must complete all assigned tutorials and record your progress on your Lesson Plan
- Each tutorial should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete
- If you rush through the tutorial, you will be asked to re-do
- If you feel yourself getting tired and you are unable to concentrate, please alert Mrs. Cooper; you can work on something else and come back to *Ripple Effects* later
Appendix E
Approval Email from Ripple Effects® for Teens Creators

>>> On 10/18/2013 at 10:02 AM, Lew Brentano <lbrentano@rippleeffects.com> wrote:

Hello Rosie,

By this e-mail ripple effects gives you permission to use images from the Ripple Effects computer programs in your dissertation, and any related print or electronic materials. We would ask that you note that these are copyright Ripple Effects.

Hope that helps, and look forward to reading your dissertation.

Lew

Lew Brentano
Vice President, Ripple Effects
888-259-6618
cell: 408-656-7407
An NREPP listed program for academic achievement and resiliency
Appendix F
Parental Information Letter and Consent Form (p. 1 of 3)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Rosie Cooper, and I am employed by the County School District, and I am also a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University. I am working on my thesis and the focus is a study on the behavior intervention curriculum being used in the in-school suspension program at High School. The name of my research study is titled, A Mixed Methods Study: Evaluating the Effects of Computer-Based Behavior Training Software on the Behavior of In-School Suspension Students, and this study has received the approval of both High SchoolPrincipal and the County School District.

The purpose of my study is to evaluate the Ripple Effects social behavior curriculum being used with in-school suspension students. A portion of the study will consist of student focus group interviews to assess students' perspectives of this curriculum. A focus group interview is where a group of people are brought together to discuss their opinions, beliefs, and perceptions of a product or service. In this case, the focus group will consist of students who have all participated in the Ripple Effects curriculum through in-school suspension. Students will be asked open-ended questions about their experiences with the curriculum and be encouraged to discuss their opinions freely with other students. Because your child has attended in-school suspension this school year and has received the curriculum, he/she is being asked to participate in a student interview. This is important, as the student feedback I receive will help to make in-school suspension a more successful program by improving the learning environment.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information on the study that will help you decide whether you want your child to participate or not. Participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Interview Content: The interview will be recorded using an audio-recording device and will gather information on the student's feelings and attitudes about their behavior and about the Ripple Effects curriculum received through in-school suspension.

It is Voluntary: Your child does not have to participate in the interview. Students who do participate only have to answer the questions that they want to answer and they may stop participating at any time. If your child decides not to participate or does not answer some of the interview questions, it will not affect your child's services in the school nor will it affect your child's grades in any way. If your child does participate and does answer all of the interview questions, it will not affect your child's services in the school nor will it affect your child's grades in any way.

It is Anonymous: Your child's name, student number, or any other potentially identifiable information will not be attached to the focus group data or recorded for reporting purposes. The results will be made available for analysis only under strict confidentiality with only the research study staff hearing the audio recording of the interview and seeing the transcription of the completed focus group. The transcription of the interview will be completed by Rosie Cooper, the student researcher. Any other members of the staff will not hear the audio recording or see the interview transcript except in the summary form, which will be presented in the final thesis.

Administration: The focus group will be completed during school hours and will last approximately 30-minutes. Your child's participation in the focus group will affect your child's services in the school nor will it affect your child's grades in any way. The focus group will be administered on ____________, 2013, and it will be conducted by me in a student group setting during your child's lunch block. Because your child will not be attending lunch during this time, your child will be provided with an outside lunch that I will pick up in advance and have for your child during the focus group. Lunch will consist of sandwiches, chips, cookies, and bottled water and will be purchased for your child by me from a local sandwich shop. Your child will not miss any school assignments while participating in this focus group.

Please read the attached Parental Information and Consent form. If you give permission for your child to participate, please sign the form and return it to the school through your child. If you have questions regarding this letter or the interview process, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email or telephone number listed below.

Sincerely,

Rosie N. Cooper
cooper.r@usu.edu
850.475.5257, ext. 245 or 315
Parental Information and Consent Form

Name of Investigator(s): Nena Stracuzzi, Ph.D., Principal Investigator; Rosie Cooper, Student Researcher

Title of Project: A Mixed Methods Study Evaluating the Effects of Computer-Based Behavior Training Software on the Behavior of In-School Suspension Students

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

I, Rosie N. Cooper, an employee of the County School District and a student researcher at Northeastern University, am inviting your child to take part in a research study. This study has received the approval of both the High School Principal and the County School District. The purpose of this form is to tell you and your child about the study and to receive permission for your child to participate in the study. Prior to making a decision about participation you and your child may ask any questions that you have. When you and your child are ready to make a decision, your child may tell me if he or she wants to participate or not. Your child does not have to participate if he or she does not want to. If your child decides to participate, I am asking you to sign this statement. I will give your child a copy to keep.

Why is my child being asked to take part in this research study?

Your child is being asked to participate because your child has attended in-school suspension at High School during this school year and has worked on a district-approved software-based behavior curriculum called Ripple Effects.

Why is this research study being done?

A portion of the study will consist of student interviews to assess students’ thoughts, feelings, and opinions of the Ripple Effects curriculum being used in the In-School Suspension program. This research is being conducted to provide the school and school district with details on the effectiveness of the curriculum we currently have in place in in-school suspension.

What will my child be asked to do?

If your child decides to take part in this study, I will ask your child to participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview with other students. The focus group will be conducted by me and will consist of me asking questions regarding your child’s thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects software program being used in In-School Suspension. Once your child completes the focus group, your child’s participation in this study will conclude.

Where will this take place and how much of my child’s time will it take?

The focus group will be completed during the lunch block and will last approximately 60-minutes. Because your child will be missing the regularly scheduled lunchtime, I will provide your child with lunch during this time (sandwiches, chips, cookies, and bottled water from a local sandwich shop will be brought in for your child). Your child’s attendance at the focus group will not affect your child’s services in the school nor will it affect your child’s grades in any way. The focus group will be administered on __________, 2013, and it will be conducted by me in a student group setting in a conference room located in an office area of the school.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to my child?

There are no known risks associated with your child’s participation in this interview.

Will my child benefit by being in this research?

There is no direct benefit; however, your child’s participation may help to benefit the school by providing data that can help to improve the In-School Suspension curriculum being used with students.

Approved

NU IRB

Valid through __________, 2013
Who will see the information about my child?
Your child's part in this study will be confidential. Your child's name, student number, or any other potentially identifiable information will not be attached to the interview data or recorded for reporting purposes. The results will be made available for analysis only under strict confidentiality with only the research study staff hearing the audio-recording of the interview and seeing the transcription of the completed interview. Any other members of the school staff will not hear the audio recording or see the interview transcript except in the summary form, which will be presented in the final reporting. The recording of the interview will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study and the transcripts of the interview will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in the a locked office of the school. The transcripts will be destroyed after five years of being stored at the school.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about your child in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. I would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

Can I or my child stop my child's participation in this study?
Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your child does not have to participate if he or she does not want to and he or she can refuse to answer any question asked during the focus group. Even if your child begins the focus group, your child may quit at any time. If your child does not participate or if your child decides to quit, he or she will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that he or she would otherwise have as a student.

Who can I or my child contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, Rosie N. Cooper, by phone at 850.475.5527, ext. 245 or by email at cooper.r@husky.neu.edu. I am the person mainly responsible for this research. You can also contact the Principal Investigator for this study, Nena Stacuzzi, Ph.D., School of Education, Northeastern University, by phone at 617.433.6189 or by email at n.stacuzzi@neu.edu.

Who can I contact about my child’s rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights or your child's rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 660 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, by telephone at 617.373.4588, or by email at n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
There is no compensation/payment for being a research participant.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There are no financial costs for participating in this study.

I agree to have my child, _______________, take part in this research.

__________________________
Signature of parent agreeing to take part

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Printed name of person above

__________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix G
Faculty/Administrative Recruitment Email

Dear Faculty and Administration,

I am a County School District employee and a doctoral candidate in the Education Department in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. I am conducting a study on the effects of the Ripple Effects behavior intervention software being used with students in the in-school suspension program at High School. A portion of my study will be focused on faculty and administrative perspectives of student behavior after students have received the Ripple Effects intervention through in-school suspension. For this reason, I am seeking faculty and administrative participants to participate in a focus group interview. The selection criterion is as follows:

1) Participants have been employed as teachers or administrators of students who have received the Ripple Effects intervention through in-school suspension during the 2012-2013 school year.

2) Participants are willing to participate in one 60-minute interview at a time and location that ensures an open and engaging discussion.

3) Participants agree to the use of audio recording of the focus group.

4) Participants agree to the publishing of data in a dissertation with all personal information being made confidential. A copy of the dissertation will be made available for your review after study completion.

One focus group will be conducted with you at a location and time that is most convenient. The focus group will be audio-recorded and will be approximately one hour in length. The focus group will be confidential. Your name and the school’s name will not be included in the study. The audio recording done during the focus group will be destroyed after the data has been analyzed.

The results of this study will be used to have a better understanding of a successful in-school suspension program for your school. In addition, these results will be shared with the Superintendent of County School District in an effort to provide the district with more options for behavior modification programs in high schools.

If you meet the selection criteria and are willing to participate in the study, please respond to this email (cooper.r@husky.neu.edu) to further discuss your participation.

Thank you in advance for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rosie N. Cooper,
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
Faculty and Administrative Informed Consent Form

Name of Investigator(s): Nena Stracuzzi, Ph.D., Principal Investigator; Rosie Cooper, Student Researcher

Title of Project: A Mixed Methods Study Evaluating the Effects of Computer-Based Behavior Training Software on the Behavior of In-School Suspension Students

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
I, Rosie N. Cooper, an County School District employee and a student researcher at Northeastern University, am inviting you to take part in a research study. This study has received the approval of both High School Principal and the County School District. The purpose of this form is to tell you about the study and to get your consent to participate in the study. Prior to making a decision about participation you may ask any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell me you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You are being asked to participate because you taught or administered to students who attended in-school suspension and received the Ripple Effects curriculum at High School during the 2012-2013 school year.

Why is this research study being done?
A portion of the study will consist of faculty and administrative interviews to assess faculty members' and administrative members' thoughts, feelings, and opinions of the Ripple Effects curriculum being used in the In-School Suspension program.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in an audio-recorded interview in a group setting with other faculty or administrative members. The interview will be conducted by me and will consist of me asking questions regarding your thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the effectiveness of the Ripple Effects software program being used in In-School Suspension. Once you complete the interview and review the transcript for accuracy, your participation in this study will conclude.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
The interview will be completed either before or after school hours, depending on your availability, and will last approximately 60-minutes. The interview will be administered on __________, 2013, and it will be conducted by me in a group setting in a conference room located in an office area of the school.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There are no known risks associated with your participation in this interview.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There is no direct benefit; however, your participation may help to benefit the school by providing data that can help to improve the In-School Suspension curriculum being used with students.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Your name or any other potentially identifiable information will not be attached to the interview data or recorded for reporting purposes. The results will be made available for analysis only under strict confidentiality with only the research study staff hearing the audio-recording of the interview and seeing the transcription of the completed interview. Any

APPROVED
NU ID: CPS 13-04-08
VALID THROUGH E1/14
other members of the school staff will not hear the audio-recording or see the interview transcript except in the summary form which will be presented in the final thesis. The recording of the interview will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study and the transcripts of the interview will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in a locked office at the school. The transcripts will be destroyed after five years of being stored at the school.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. I would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question asked during the interview. Even if you begin the interview, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, Rosie N. Cooper, by phone at 850.475.5257, ext. 245 or by email at cooper.r@husky.neu.edu. I am the person mainly responsible for this research. You can also contact the Principal Investigator for this study, Nena Stracuzzi, Ph.D., School of Education, Northeastern University, by phone at 617.435.6189 or by email at n.stracuzzi@neu.edu.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, by telephone at 617.373.4588, or by email at n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish. Will I be paid for my participation?

There is no compensation/payment for being a research participant.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There are no financial costs for participating in this study.

I agree to take part in this research.

__________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part

__________
Date

__________________________
Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent

__________
Date

__________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix I
Student Focus Group Protocol

Introduction to be given by Student Researcher Rosie N. Cooper:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for returning your signed Parent Information and Consent Form. By doing so, you have given consent to participate in one focus group interview which will last approximately sixty (60) minutes. The information you share during the interview will be confidential. This interview will be recorded, but the recording will be destroyed after the data has been recorded by me. Your name and the school’s name will not be included in the reporting of this data in order to protect your privacy. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Participant Status Check:
The Student Researcher will stop periodically throughout the interview to check on the well-being of the participants. This will be done to assure that there is no discomfort in proceeding with the remainder of the interview.

Questions for Student Focus Group Interview:
Five open-ended questions, with prompts, will be used to guide the focus group interview:

1) Do you believe that in-school suspension is an appropriate behavior consequence?
   Prompt: If yes, please describe the reasons that contribute to your feelings of satisfaction.
   Prompt: If no, please describe the factors that contribute to your feelings of dissatisfaction.

2) What is your perception of the Ripple Effects software program you used while attending in-school suspension?
   Prompt: Describe how you felt while using this program.

3) Do you feel that your overall classroom behavior has improved here since working on the Ripple Effects program?
   Prompt: If yes, please tell me about specific incidences where you’ve seen an improvement in your behavior.
   Prompt: If no, please tell me about specific incidences where you’ve seen a decline in your behavior.

4) Share with me specific Ripple Effects tutorials that you find memorable or useful to your success after finishing in-school suspension and returning to the regular classroom setting.
   Prompt: Are you currently using any of these specific behavior strategies that the Ripple Effects program introduced you to?
   Prompt: How did you apply the strategy and what were the results?

5) How could this program be made better?
   Prompt: What would you change about Ripple Effects, if anything?

Conclusion:
Again, I want to thank you for participating in this interview. This audio recording will be kept private and the interview will be transcribed. I will destroy this tape once I have made a reporting of the data. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you, again. Your participation is greatly appreciated.
Appendix J
Faculty/Administrative Focus Group Protocol

Introduction to be given by Student Researcher Rosie N. Cooper:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for signing and returning the Faculty and Administrative Informed Consent Letter. By doing so, you have given consent to participate in one focus group interview which will last approximately sixty (60) minutes. The information you share during the interview will be confidential. This interview will be recorded, but the recording will be destroyed after the data has been recorded by me. Your name and the school’s name will not be included in the reporting of this data in order to protect your privacy. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Participant Status Check:
The Student Researcher will stop periodically throughout the interview to check on the well-being of the participants. This will be done to assure that there is no discomfort in proceeding with the remainder of the interview.

Questions for Faculty and Administrative Focus Group Interview:
Five open-ended questions, with prompts, will be used to guide the focus group interview:

1) What is your perception of in-school suspension and its impact on student behavior?
   Prompt: Do you believe that in-school suspension is an appropriate behavior consequence?

2) Do you feel that overall student classroom behavior has improved here since implementing the in-school suspension program?
   Prompt: Tell me about specific incidences where you’ve seen improvement or a lack thereof.

3) What is your perception of using the Ripple Effects computer-based behavior intervention program as a curriculum for in-school suspension students?
   Prompt: Tell me about changes you’ve seen with specific behaviors.

4) Have you experienced improvement in the classroom behavior of students who have gone to in-school suspension and received the Ripple Effects behavior intervention curriculum?
   Prompt: Describe exactly what your classroom experience has been with these students.

5) How could this program be made better?

Conclusion:
Again, I want to thank you for participating in this interview. This audio recording will be kept private and the interview will be transcribed. I would like to provide you with a copy of the transcription by email so that you can review the content for accuracy. My goal is to report the data exactly as you’ve given it to me today. I would like for you to review it carefully once you receive it and notify me of any changes. Will you be available to do this? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you, again. Your participation is greatly appreciated.
Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that *Rosie Cooper* successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 02/27/2012

Certification Number: 877795
Appendix L
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board Approval

Northeastern
NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION
Date: May 6, 2013 IRB #: CPS13-04-08
Principal Investigator(s): Nena Stracuzzi
Rosie N. Cooper
Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies
Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University
Title of Project: A Mixed-Methods Study Evaluating the Effects of
Computer-Based Behavior Training Software on the
Behavior of In-School Suspension Students
Participating Sites: School District Superintendent’s Permission Letter on file
DHSIS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents: One (1) signed parent/guardian consent and child assent form
One (1) signed consent for faculty and administrators

This project is approved under 45CFR46.404 which applies to children as research subjects and involves research not
involving greater than minimal risk. Adequate provisions are made for soliciting the assent of the children and the
permission of their parents or guardians, as set forth in 45CFR46.408.

Monitoring Interval: 12 months
APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: MAY 5, 2014
Investigator's Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when
recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must
be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month
prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any
other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630