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Evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program

Joyce Ann Dunlap
Gardner-Webb University

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Evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program

By
Joyce Ann Dunlap

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Joyce Ann Dunlap under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

David W. Shellman, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

Date

A. Douglas Eury, Ed.D.
Committee Member

Date

Elaine J. Copeland, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Gayle Bolt Price, Ed.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Date

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, the late Betty Dunlap, and my grandmother, the late Roberta Gordon. Mom and Granny, although you were not able to see me to the end of this endeavor, I will always treasure your words of encouragement, love, and support.

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Abstract

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The schools in Union County have undergone a tremendous amount of growth in the past decade. The growth in the county has led to an increase in discipline problems. In order to provide suspended students a second chance, Union County Public Schools implemented an alternative to suspension program, the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program (UCATS). The UCATS Program provides students suspended for 2 to 10 days the opportunity to earn attendance credit by performing community service in local business agencies in Union County.

The researcher conducted a program evaluation using archival and survey data to answer the research questions: (1) To what extent does the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program (UCATS) fulfill the seven objectives of the program; (2) What are the perceptions of the students, stakeholders, administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners of the UCATS Program as related to the desired outcomes; and (3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

The researcher surveyed and examined historical documents archival data pertaining to students participating in the UCATS Program. The researcher also surveyed teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents of students who were in the program, the UCATS staff and community/business agency supervisors.

The research results indicated that the UCATS Program did not fulfill two of the seven objectives. Students' grades declined after they participated in the program and there was an increase in crime for 4 years and then there was a decrease. The students, parents, and administrators ranked UCATS as the most effective alternative to suspension program. Teachers ranked Saturday detention as the most effective alternative to suspension program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past decade, the Union County Public Schools (UCPS) system has evolved from a primarily rural school district with a relatively moderate student enrollment of 19,264 (UCPS, 2005) to the eighth largest school district in North Carolina with 37,110 students (UCPS, 2007). During this same period of growth in student population, North Carolina with its ABC Accountability Program and the federal government with its No Child Left Behind, placed greater emphasis on student performance and accountability. To meet the demands of these two accountability programs, instructional time has become a precious commodity. Removing a student from an instructional environment has become a less desirable option for educators. Short-term and long-term suspensions in the district continue to decrease the amount of instructional time the student has with his or her teacher. To combat this growing concern over student suspension, Union County Public Schools developed an alternative program for suspended students.

The Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program formed partnerships with the community and the Union County Public Schools. The UCATS Program provided middle and high school students on short-term suspension the opportunity to receive a second chance through community service. The primary goal of the program was for students to learn from their mistakes and gain better decision-making skills. UCATS is a therapeutic and rehabilitative approach used with suspended students (Centralina Workforce Development Board, 2004). A study of the UCATS Program employed a two-step evaluation process. A formative evaluation was used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. A summative evaluation was conducted to determine if the program was practical and worthy of sustaining.

Description of the Setting

Union County is the fastest growing county in population in North Carolina, thus producing the fastest growing system school system in North Carolina. The Union County Public Schools (UCPS) system is the eighth largest school district in state with student enrollment that has increased by 71% in the last 10 years (UCPS, 2006). Currently, there are approximately 37,110 students enrolled in the 48 schools with a projection of 49,000 by 2014 (UCPS, 2007). A Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Assistant Superintendent of Administration, Assistant Superintendent of Auxiliary Services, and Assistant Superintendent of Building Operations manage the operation of Union County's 48 schools. The school system is comprised of eight attendance clusters consisting of a minimum of three feeder elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The Monroe Cluster is the most diverse cluster. The socio-economic status in this cluster ranges from poverty to wealthy and consists of single-parent households as well as the professional two-parent households. In addition, the Monroe cluster has a growing Hispanic population that makes it even more diverse.

Three attendance clusters are on the rural perimeter of the county. The students who reside in these clusters represent the traditional farm families and local blue-collar workers. Four clusters in the western part of the county represent suburbia. The families who compose these clusters are predominately professional upper middle class, two-parent Caucasian families who reside in single-family dwellings.

Union County has four specialty schools. They are Central Academy of Technology, South Providence, Wolfe School, and the Walter Bickett Center. The Central Academy of Technology provides students with a technical course of study to

qualified students from all attendance clusters. South Providence, the alternative school, enrolls middle and high school students from all clusters who need a smaller, more structured educational environment. The Wolfe School provides services for Exceptional Children in Grades K-12. Finally, The Walter Bickett Center provides a curriculum for 4-year-old students. The majority of these students speak English as a second language.

Because of its continued growth in student population, the Union County Public Schools System was forced to build new schools. During the 2006-2007 school year, Rock Ridge Elementary, in the Monroe cluster, and the Early College, located on the campus of South Piedmont Community College, were opened to students. Marvin Ridge High School, Marvin Ridge Middle School, Rocky River Elementary, and Rea View Elementary began operations in August 2007. Due to the increase in student population and additional schools, a new attendance cluster in the western portion of the district was formed in 2007.

Two high schools were the focus of this investigation, school A and school B. The two schools are the most extreme in terms of demographic information.

Table 1

Ethnic Membership by School, August 2007

Ethnicity	School A		School B	
	N=728		N= 1533	
	N	%	N	%
African American	356	48.9	86	5.61
Asian	6	<1.0	32	2.09
Hispanic	249	34.20	47	3.07
Multiracial	11	1.51	21	1.36
Native American	2	<1.0	5	<1.0
White (Caucasian)	107	14.70	1342	87.54
Total	728		1533	

(Ethnicity Membership Report, 2007).

Table 1 shows that during the first month of school, school A, reported an enrollment of 728 students of which 107 were White (Caucasian) and the other 621 students were minority. School B, on the other hand, reported an enrollment of 1,533 in which 1,342 students were White (Caucasian) and only 191 were minority students. Both schools hold accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). School A had the performance status of School in Progress because at least 60% of the students scored at or above grade level. School B, with at least 80% of the students at or above grade level, received the status of School in Progress (UCPS, 2007).

Description of the Problem

Teachers and school administrators face school violence and misbehavior daily.

From a national perspective, the number of suspensions nearly doubled from 1974 to 1998 (Bosworth & Ford, 2005). In 1974, the suspension rate was 3.7% (Brooks, Schiraldi & Zeildenberg, 2000). The results of a survey conducted by the Office of Civil Rights (1998) showed elementary and secondary schools reported that there were 3,185,721 students (6.93%) suspended and 87,298 (0.19%) students expelled in 1998. In 1997, administrators nationally suspended 3.1 million students from school for nonviolent and noncriminal acts (Taras et al., 2003).

North Carolina's annual crime and violence reports and annual suspension and expulsion are reflective of the growing problem of student suspensions. In 2000-2001, North Carolina had 217,758 short-term suspensions and 114,621 expulsions (North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention [NCDJJD], 2002). These violations resulted in the loss of 650,000 instructional days. There was concern about the number of students suspended, the consequences of the suspension, and the effectiveness of the survey. A report generated by the National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], Digest of Educational Statistics (U. S. Department of Education, 2004) on suspensions and expulsions in the United States indicated that 3,053,449 students were suspended from elementary and secondary schools. It was reported that 6.6% of the total student enrollment received suspensions from school. That same year, North Carolina school officials suspended 120,520 students or 9.6% of the student enrollment. The 9.6% suspension rate in North Carolina resulted in an average that was 45% higher than the national average (U. S Department of Education, 2004). In 2001, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation to explore alternatives to short-term suspensions with an emphasis on community involvement as part of the solution. From 2001 to 2004, 875,566 students received out-of-school suspensions from North Carolina schools. Union

County Public Schools suspended 19,001 students from school (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2005) during the same period. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's 2005 Annual Study on Suspension and Expulsion reported 5,680 short-term suspensions in Charlotte Mecklenburg for the 2004-2005 school year. Other school districts reported the following: 4,275 suspensions in Cabarrus County; 8,934 in Forsyth County; 7,653 in Gaston County; 12,927 in Guilford County; 3,703 in Iredell Statesville; and 5,365 in Union County (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2005). Union County Public Schools reported almost as many suspensions as Charlotte Mecklenburg, a district that is more than two and a half times larger than Union County Public Schools.

Statement of the Problem

The annual report indicated that North Carolina had a problem with students receiving out-of-school suspensions as consequences for their inappropriate behaviors. These students do not have access to instructional opportunities and become at risk for failure due to absences and academics. The problem in North Carolina and the nation is that too many students are receiving suspensions for inappropriate behavior. The number of suspensions for Union County Public Schools from 2001-2002 is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Union County Short-Term Suspension Data

Year	Number of Short-Term Suspensions	Gender		
		Unspecified	Males	Females
2001-2002	4,602		3,475	1,127
2002-2003	4,582		3,457	1,125
2003-2004	5,365	12	4,002	1,351
2004-2005	4,452		3,260	1,192
2005-2006	6,618		4,845	1,773
2006-2007	6,694		4,946	1,748

(North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2003, 2004a, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008).

In the 2001-2002 school year, 4,602 students received short-term suspensions. Of the 4,602 students, 3,475 were males and 1,127 were females. During the 2002-2003 school year, the number of students suspended decreased by only 20 students. As a result, 4,582 students received suspensions. There were 18 fewer male suspensions and two fewer female suspensions reported in the 2002-2003 school year. In the 2003-2004 school year, the number of suspensions increased by 782 with 5,363 student suspensions registered. There were 4,002 male students suspended from school, which was an increase of 545, and 1,351 female students suspended, which was an increase of 226 students. Twelve students who were suspended did not specify their gender. In 2004-2005, the number of suspensions decreased from 5,363 to 4,452, which was a decrease of 913 students. The number of male students receiving out-of-school suspensions decreased from 4,002 to 3,260, which resulted in a difference of 742 male students. The

number of female students decreased from 1,251 to 1,192, a decrease of 158 female students. In 2005-2006, 6,618 students received short-term suspensions in UCPS resulting in an increase of 2,166 students. The number of females suspended increased by 581 and the number of males suspended increased by 1,585. The number of students suspended in 2006-2007 increased by 76 with 6,694 suspensions reported. The number of females suspended decreased by 25, but the number of males suspended increased by 101.

Union County Public Schools piloted an alternative to suspension program in February 2004. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. This assessment contained the following objectives: to determine to what extent the UCATS Program meets the objectives established in 2004; to determine the perception of students, teachers, administrators, UCATS staff and community partners related to the success of the program; and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Use of a discrepancy model compared the difference between the original objectives and the extent to which the UCATS Program attained the objectives, in order for the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the UCATS Program.

Rationale for the UCATS Program

From 2001 to 2004, Union County Public Schools suspended 19,001 students from school. These students missed valuable instructional opportunities and became at risk for failure due to absence or academics. Suspended students run the risk of spending the entire day unsupervised and have the unfortunate opportunity to commit a crime (Taras et al., 2003). The Union County Alternative to Suspension Program offered students a second chance through community service. Some of the advantages to

attending the UCATS Program were as follows: The parents of suspended students need not worry about leaving their child home unsupervised during the day. Participation in the program would enable students to maintain their academic work by the completion of homework assignments, and participation in the program could lead to a decrease in the number of students dropping out of school and failing because of excessive absences. Students could gain real life job experience, receive credit for attendance when they complete the program, and benefit from daily counseling sessions from the UCATS staff (UCPS, 2004a).

Description of the UCATS Program

The Union County Alternative to Suspension Program is a community service-based program that provides students with a second chance when they receive an out-of-school suspension for 2 to 10 days. The program requires the schools, parents, students, and the community to work together to provide suspended students an alternative to the traditional out-of-school suspension (UCPS, 2004a).

UCATS Mission Statement

To implement in Union County an integrated program which will utilize a variety of community resources including schools, agencies, governmental entities, and businesses in an effort to minimize unsupervised and non-productive student activity during out-of-school suspension in order to build in our youth a sense of duty to their community. (UCPS, 2004b, para. 2)

Description of Barriers

Before presenting and implementing the program, the assistant superintendent and the UCATS Program coordinator interviewed a group of principals and assistant principals for their input. Some of the concerns addressed were transportation to and from

the work sites, reporting of the offenses on the Student Information Management System (SIMS) and D-TRAK[®] programs, the number of prior offenses the students may have accumulated over time, and if the program would be perceived as extra work by the administrators (UCPS, 2004a). The stakeholders involved in this program are the superintendent, assistant superintendent, building administrators, the UCATS staff, and the board of education. The Alternative to Suspension Program promoted win/win scenario results for all beneficiaries (student participants and their parents) participating in the program.

Win/Win Benefits

Participation in the UCATS Program promoted win/win scenarios. For the parents, it opened up the lines of communication with the school personnel in immediately addressing their child's behavior problem by offering the parent an option to the student's suspension. The parents need not worry about leaving their child home unsupervised during the day and would have greater assurance that the student would remain in school (UCPS, 2004a).

Students won by having inappropriate behaviors addressed in an immediate and constructive manner. Students were able to maintain their academic work by the completion of homework assignments and receive attendance credit that may decrease their likelihood of failing due to absences. Participating in the program allowed the student to gain real life job experience, explore career pathways, and encounter positive role models (UCPS, 2004a).

The community agencies/businesses who participated gave back to the community while they received free labor for 2 to 10 days. The agencies and businesses provided positive role models for the students and received public recognition and

exposure. The agencies were also exposed to possible potential employees (UCPS, 2004a).

UCPS won by building stronger community partnerships with the businesses and agencies as well as with parents. The students had an opportunity to make up work so they were less likely to fall behind academically and drop out of school. This allowed the district to keep financial incentives that might be lost to increases in the dropout rate (UCPS, 2004a).

Student Success Outcomes

Students participating in the program received assignments to locations where they performed community service for the duration of their suspension. Each student received daily one-on-one counseling related to the behaviors that led to the suspension from the UCATS staff. In addition, each student must have completed a journal of the day's activities as well as a questionnaire. The students were responsible for completing all homework assignments in a timely manner. Students who successfully completed the program received credit for attendance and a certificate of completion (UCPS, 2004a, 2004b).

UCATS Objectives

The Union County alternative to out-of-school suspension objectives are as follows:

1. To develop an alternative to traditional out-of-school suspension;
2. To ensure that students are constructively occupied during suspension;
3. To avoid interruption and deter potential in the student's academic process;
4. To prevent and deter the students involvement in the juvenile court system;
5. To provide individual counseling for each student;

6. To give students real world experience that relate to their education; and
7. To enhance self-esteem and increase self-respect (UCATS, 2004b).

Student Discipline Qualifications

A description of student behaviors that qualify a student for UCATS participation is listed in the Student Discipline-Middle & High School Policy section of the Union County Public Schools Policy Manual. Discipline infractions fall into three categories: eligible for consideration, ineligible for consideration, and possible considerations for eligibility (Appendix A). Some of the infractions eligible for consideration include fighting, threatening, or attempting to cause physical violence, profanity toward a school employee, theft, and vandalism. Infractions that are possible consideration for UCATS participation are behaviors that incite a riot or sexual harassment. Violence toward a school employee, possession of illegal drugs and alcohol, sexual assault and use of a weapon are infractions in which students are not eligible to participate in the UCATS Program (UCPS, 2004a).

Procedural Guidelines for UCATS Selection

Step 1: A student violated a UCPS discipline policy and/or school rule and received an out-of-school suspension from the school administrator. The type of infraction determined if a student was eligible for UCATS and the number of suspension days the student received.

Step 2: Parents were notified and offered the option of participating in the UCATS Program. When the parent agreed for the student to participate, the parent was provided with the UCATS Program coordinator's phone number. The principal or designee faxed a copy of the suspension report to the UCATS office for processing. The UCATS coordinator assigned the student to a work site for the suspension dates and

informed the parent where to meet for the initial intake process. The student was responsible for collecting all necessary schoolbooks in order to perform homework assignments while they participated in the program.

Step 3: The parent and the student attended the initial intake meeting with the assigned UCATS personnel on the first day of the suspension. The meetings occurred at the community service work site with the student, parent(s), community service coordinator (an employee of the agency or business), and the UCATS staff person. The counselor reviewed the program responsibilities with the parent and the parent signed the consent forms.

Step 4: The parents were responsible for providing transportation, lunch, and snacks for the student each day the student participated in the program. Students worked from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. performing assigned duties under the constant supervision of the work site coordinator. The UCATS staff evaluated the student's performance daily.

Step 5: The counselor or UCATS coordinator met with the student and the parent to conduct an exit interview. The work site coordinator completed an assessment of the student's performance and reviewed the information with the student, and the parents shared their opinions regarding the student's participation in the program with the counselor or program coordinator.

Step 6: The community service work site coordinator sent the student work evaluation back to the home school. The school's administrator/counselor interviewed and congratulated the student on his/her successful completion of the UCATS Program and provided encouragement to practice positive acceptable behavior and presented the student with a certificate of completion.

Step 7: The student's work/time sheet was sent to the student's school SIMS

coordinator documenting the hours/days of program participation. The SIMS coordinator added back the days the student was absent while in suspension (UCPS, 2004a).

Rationale for a Program Evaluation

Program evaluations serve many purposes in the educational arena with the main purpose focusing on improving the quality of the program. Evaluations serve as a means of communicating information to the educational community. The educational arena involves an audience composed of the business and political communities as well as those involved in the schools. In far too many instances, the public receives information on educational programs from the media reported by individuals who are not familiar with the mechanics of the entire program. Therefore, biased information can be detrimental to the continuation of such programs. It is important that the public receives a comprehensive report on the attainment of program goals and objectives.

Program evaluation is defined as “the process or effectiveness of an activity for the purpose of decision-making and focuses on three words: value, effectiveness, and decision-making” (California Evaluation Improvement Project, 1977, p. A-5). Values are the net worth of the program. The evaluation takes into consideration the cost in relation to the program benefits. Effectiveness is the measurement of the achievement of objectives met as well as the impact the program makes on the community. The person making decisions needs to know information on the value and the effectiveness of the program, identify the strengths and weaknesses, which are useful in deciding what to do next, and determine whether to continue to modify or to discontinue the program (California Evaluation Improvement Project, 1977). Evaluation is an ongoing process, which can occur at the start, during a program, or after the program ends. When performed systematically, an evaluation provides information for sound decisions. A

periodic evaluation provides the staff with necessary information for program modification (California Evaluation Improvement Project, 1977, A-5).

Union County Public Schools implemented the UCATS Program in February 2004 to provide community service opportunities for students who received short-term out-of-school suspensions for violating district and school policies. A program evaluation was used to provide information, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives were met, and identify the different perceptions of the program. The discrepancy model was used to evaluate the UCATS Program. The discrepancy model is an objectives-oriented program evaluation model that determines the extent to which the objectives of a program are accomplished (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Conceptual Framework

Gall, Gall, & Borg (2003) defined a need “as a discrepancy between an existing set of data and a desired set of conditions” (p. 556). The discrepancy model is an objectives-oriented program based on the achievement of goals to determine whether a program is a success or a failure. The model is also used to determine what modifications are needed or if the program should be terminated (Worthen et al., 1997). The discrepancy model utilizes four evaluations—design, input, process, and outcome—to determine the worth of a program (Steinmetz, 2000).

Andres Steinmetz (2000) defined design evaluation as “judging the adequacy of program intentions” and “the construct and logical or operational validity of an asset of a set of intentions” (p. 140). The program plan is evaluated for “comprehensiveness, appropriateness to the situation, and the relationship to known needs” (Steinmetz, p. 140). The evaluator may also make an analysis of the utilization of the appropriateness of

human resources, in addition to an assessment of the program objectives and the activities needed to implement, and the program goals (Stufflebeam, 2000). The design evaluation in this study examined the program appropriateness of needs that existed when the program was implemented in 2004.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives of the program?
2. What are the perceptions of the stakeholders, students, parents, administrators, teachers, UCATS counselors, and community partners of the UCATS Program as related to the desired outcomes?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

Summary

Union County has changed from a rural school system to one of the fastest growing counties in the country. This growth has resulted in an increase in the number of discipline problems. Teachers and administrators face the problem of student misbehavior daily. Some of the discipline problems result in out-of-school suspension. To combat the concern over short-term suspension, Union County Public Schools implemented an alternative to out-of-school suspension program. UCATS is a community service alternative to suspension program for students suspended from school for 2 to 10 days. The UCATS Program provides students with a second chance by giving attendance credit to students who successfully complete the program. Suspended students are offered the opportunity to work in different organizations throughout Union County instead of the traditional out-of-school suspension. The goal of the UCATS Program is to help students gain better decision-making skills. UCATS requires parental involvement

and establishes a relationship with the school, community, student, and the parents. The discrepancy model for program evaluation was used to evaluate the UCATS Program. The discrepancy model compared performance with a standard and the difference results in the discrepancy. The discrepancy model involved four evaluations: program design evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. The design evaluations identify the standards of the program. The input evaluation examines how many resources are available. The process evaluation measures the extent to which the activities are carried out. The outcome evaluation measures the extent to which planned activities are carried out (Steinmetz, 2000).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 presents the review of related literature associated with alternatives to out-of-school suspension. The Chapter consists of two sections. The first section describes the various types of alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs in operation. The second portion of the Chapter concentrates on models used to evaluate educational programs. The Chapter ends with a summary of the restatement of the purpose for the evaluation.

Historically, the view of suspensions and expulsions has been one of punitive sanctions meant to send a clear deterrent message to both the parent and student concerning the seriousness of the student's misbehavior (Dupper, 1994; Greenberg & Bumbarger, 1999). Suspensions and expulsions are methods used by school administrators to decrease violence, discourage drug abuse, curtail criminal activities, and deal with difficult and challenging behaviors (Taras et al., 2003). Strader (2004) stated "Suspensions and expulsions are a product of student behavior, school policy, and the application of school policy" (p. 65).

Teachers and school administrators face the problem of student misbehavior daily. Misbehavior by students requires implementation of discipline plans and policies that ensure an atmosphere conducive for learning. The violent and turbulent acts of students in the 1990s were instrumental to the passage of legislature committed to safer schools. President Clinton introduced Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994 (Goals 2000, 1994). One of the goals of the Educate America Act was to provide greater flexibility with school districts to include comprehensive school safety strategies in coordination with community activities and to implement violence prevention activities (Goals 2000).

Out-of-School Suspension

A short-term out-of-school suspension (OSS) is the removal of a student from the school environment for a period of not more than 10 days (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002). The state of North Carolina law defined a short-term suspension as “a suspension of 10 days or less” (North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention [NCDJJDP], 2003, p. 2). Union County Public Schools defined short-term suspension as “any out-of-school suspension of 10 days or fewer and 6 days condensed academic term” (UCPS, 2005, p. 2). The board of education explained that the principal or designee has the authority to suspend students with infractions for 10 days or less. The suspended student will have the opportunity to make up “quarterly, semester, or grading period exams missed” (UCPS, 2005, Chapter 4, p. 2).

Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions interrupt the educational process of the students and remove the students when it is most beneficial for them to receive structure and guidance. Repeat offenders find it impossible to keep up with the curriculum and complete assignments and are often retained (Richart, Brooks, & Soler, 2003). Suspended and expelled students fail to receive educational services and alternative placement. Absenteeism creates an educational gap from which many students are unable to recover. Suspended students also lack adult supervision and the unstructured time provides an opportunity for students to get into trouble (Richart et al., 2003). Hess (2003) reported Richart as stating, “Suspension may be a quick fix but it contributes to the achievement gap and starts the chain of events the leads to a kid dropping out of school” (p. 24).

Out-of-school suspension guarantees a parental conference as well as a cooling down period for the students (Greenberg & Bumbarger 1999). Lundell (1982) cited Kaeser (1979) as stating:

1. Suspension alleviates the problem situation for the moment.
2. Suspension is an immediate response to inappropriate behaviors.
3. This approach gains attention of parents.
4. Many educators hold the belief that using suspension maintains order in the classroom so that the rights of the group are preserved. (p. 69)

The 2000 U. S. Census report stated that children living in poverty and from single-parent households were suspended and expelled from school more than students living in two-parent households. Racial bias may also play a part on the disciplinary action received (DeRidder 1991; Taras et al., 2003). The suspension rate for African Americans is higher than Hispanics and Caucasians (Blomberg, n.d.; Bolton, 2001; Hess, 2003; McGinnis, 2003; Morrison & Skiba, 2001; Newsome, 2001; Taras et al.; Townsend, 2000). “African Americans are more likely to be suspended for subjective infractions” (Civil Rights Project, 2000, p. 40). Males are suspended more than females, and Blacks are suspended more than Whites and Hispanics (Taras et al.).

Real and perceived immediate threats to a student’s own safety and the safety of others are some of the underlying reasons for out-of-school suspensions (Taras et al., 2003). Fighting among students is the most frequent reason for suspension and the majority of out-of-school suspensions are for minor incidents that do not threaten the school’s safety. Disrespect, disobedience, and truancy are reasons middle school students were suspended (Skiba, 2004).

Defiance of authority, failing to attend assigned detention, disruptive behavior, attendance or tardiness problems, fighting, swearing, vandalizing school property, violating dress code (California means wearing gang “colours”), theft, and leaving school without permission were reasons for administering out-of-school suspensions to students

according to *A Focus on Discipline in California* (Rosen, 1997, p. 33).

In addition to the documentation associated with the suspension following the student throughout his/her career (Lundell, 1982), disadvantages associated with out-of-school suspensions include identifying students as troublemakers and transferring the student's records to other teachers (Bock, Tapscott, & Savner, 1998; Hollingsworth, Lufler, & Clune, 1984). Students complained that teachers do not provide assignments so they can keep up with class work which can contribute to alienation of students from school, increasing the likelihood that the student will drop out (DeRidder, 1991; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1999). Suspended students do not have access to support personnel such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers (Lundell). Additionally, suspended students are more likely to commit crimes, smoke, use alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, and are often from a population least likely to have supervision at home (Hodges, 2000; Taras et al., 2003). "Suspended students spend the day riding bicycles and skateboards" (Feucht, 1998, p. 2), watching television, playing video games, and eating to their heart's content (Sparks, 2005). Florida reports indicated that suspended students spend the days loitering in shops and malls, in addition to breaking into houses (Berger & Graham, 1998).

Suspension also creates a public relations problem that portrays suspensions as the school's inability to deal with certain situations. Parents of suspended students are concerned about the missed schoolwork and that suspension is not an acceptable way to deal with most offenses. Schools also risk the possibility that they may lose state compensation when students are absent from school (Lundell, 1982). At the Joint National Conference on Alternative to Expulsion/Suspension in February 2006, the Virginia Department of Education presented the needs of suspended and expelled

students. Suspended students need individual attention, involvement from family and community, a sense of belonging with the school positive role models, and academic and social support when they return to school (Community Service Suspension Options Programs, n.d.). Although out-of-school suspension is one of the least effective forms of punishment, it is most desired by the students (Hyman, 1997).

Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension

Alternatives to out-of-school suspension are programs designed to keep students in school after they receive suspensions for the infraction of rules. Unfortunately, only 26 states require some type of alternative educational program for suspended students (Civil Rights Project, 2000). Program goals identify and remedy the problems that help students develop self-discipline (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994). Alternatives to suspension programs may be a simple school detention or a specialized program. Some programs are located on the school campus while other programs have one or more centralized sites away from the main school campus. Alternatives programs sometimes require additional personnel to provide services for the suspended student. In-school suspension, detentions, community service programs, academic programs, and counseling programs are alternatives to suspension programs. In-school suspension programs isolate the student from the general population. Community service programs permit students to perform a required amount of time in supervised community service (Peterson, n.d.). Academic programs focus on completing class work and maintaining academic standards. Finally, counseling-based programs offer students additional support and individual counseling from trained professionals focusing on problem solving (Peterson, n.d.).

In-School Suspension

In-school suspension (ISS) is the removal of a student from the normal

educational environment and placement into a sheltered room for one class period or for several days after they commit minor infractions (Blomberg, n.d.; Hall, n.d.). A student in ISS receives credit for attending school and he/she is marked present on school attendance reports (Rock Hill High School [RHHS] Student Handbook, 2006-2007, p. 46). The typical ISS room has students isolated from the mainstream of the student body where assigned students work on assignments (RHHS Student Handbook; Monroe High School Student Handbook, 2005-2006). Teachers send assignments for the student to complete. It is the student's responsibility to provide paper, pencils, and books to complete assignments (Short et al., 1994). Refusal to complete the assignments can result in additional days added to the suspension. When assigned to ISS, the student is responsible for the class assignments that he/she misses and has 3 days to make up his/her work (RHHS Student Handbook, p. 46).

ISS programs fall into three categories: academic, punitive, and therapeutic. The academic model focuses on the belief that the student's behavior will improve with additional instructional and basic skills. The therapeutic model provides opportunities for the student to discuss his or her particular problem and to recognize how he or she can learn accommodations. The punitive model, the most typical, is based on the belief that the student misbehaves because he or she wants to cause trouble (Hartwig & Ruesch, 1994).

ISS is a powerful consequence for a student who misbehaves. Parental presence is not required and the student is restricted from normal school functions in a supervised environment (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). ISS has several drawbacks, which include supervision, an isolated location, and the parents may not be aware the student is participating in the program. According to Boynton and Boynton, "ISS is effective when

it is used sparingly, keeps students occupied with schoolwork and in an isolated location” (p. 71). An in-school suspension program is successful when there are clear purposes, written procedures, clear expectations, an academic component, a strong counseling component, provisions for engaging parents, and provisions for monitoring student progress (Hrabak & Settles, n.d.; Sanders, 2000, 2001).

Detention

After-school detention is one of the oldest and most commonly used alternatives to suspension as a consequence for misbehavior. Students usually report to a detention room where they work on assignments (Hyman, 1997; Rosen, 2005). Detention is a very powerful intervention because the parents must give permission for student participation and provide the student’s transportation home (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Effective afternoon detentions exist when provisions are in place for governing student misbehavior, unwarranted verbal communication, and movement (Boynton & Boynton, p. 66). At Owen J. Roberts High School, students are required to bring appropriate lessons or material for reading during detention. Students assigned to after-school detention are not permitted to use computers, play any type of game, or participate in extra curricula activities. Students that choose not to comply with the rules receive warnings. If they do not comply after the warnings, they are instructed to leave. Some disadvantages of detention are parental permission is required, staff involvement is required, and students will try to avoid attending (Boynton & Boynton).

Saturday School is another alternative to a suspension program. Students assigned to Saturday School arrive at a specific time, and report to a designated room where they can work on assignments. Saturday School is used for serious infractions and there are many benefits. First, the punishment is immediate. Second, the students lose their free

time on Saturday mornings. Last, Saturday School requires parental permission for participation, which also can be a shortcoming. Parental contact requires time and some circumstances may lead to the administrator placing multiple calls before assignment to Saturday School. The parents are also responsible for transporting the students to and from Saturday School.

Several indicators identify effective Saturday School programs. First, students who attend Saturday School receive better grades than the students who are suspended. Second, teachers provide assignments for students to complete. Third, there is no tolerance for inappropriate behavior. Last, students receive attendance credit and the school is able to pay the teacher for monitoring the Saturday session (Rosen, 2005). A drawback of Saturday School occurs when parents arrive late to transport the student home. The person in charge is responsible for the student until the parent arrives.

The Martin Luther King Academy for Excellence Fayette County Public School, Lexington, Kentucky, Saturday detention provides students with a positive educational experience and can be used as a deterrent for inappropriate behaviors that result in suspension. Saturday detention prevents students from losing instructional time by keeping them in school (Saturday Detention Program, n.d.). The Saturday detention consists of three components: academic, behavioral modification, and detention. The academic component of Saturday School employs a certified teacher who allows students to complete homework, make up missed work and receive remediation. The teacher also provides the students with counseling and tutorial services. Each student receives a Behavioral Modification Packet. The packet uses introspection to help students understand why they broke the rule and why they received punishment. The counseling sessions incorporate a goal-setting exercise to guide the students toward positive and

acceptable behavioral alternatives (Saturday Detention Program, n.d.).

In UCPS, students receive Saturday Work Detail assignments for inappropriate behavior. Saturday Work Detail operates from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Students report prepared to work. Students who fail to report as assigned may receive out-of-school suspensions (Parkwood High School Student Handbook, 2006-2007).

Community Service-Focused Program

Community service programs permit students suspended from school to perform supervised community projects or tasks (Peterson, n.d.). In the early 1990s, coerced community service became a new version for approaching repentance for misdeeds (Toby & Scrupski, 1992). Coerced community service requires two activities: work procurement and work supervision. Work procurement emphasizes on-campus commitment and suggests the students perform community service at other sites. Work supervision is the second activity to support the coerced community service. Supervisors must inspect the work performed by the students in order for the activity to have a value component and a lack of supervision would devalue the work performed (Moles, 1990). Coerced community service may not be practical if the school officials and the student body perceive the program as a “slap-on-the-wrist” (Moles, p. 280). Community service also serves as a deterrent to delinquency and has satisfactory effects in schools in which delinquency is high and the safety perceptions are low. Temporary improvement in discipline referrals and alienation may be the benefits of community service but not attendance or grade point average (Moles).

Nationally, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), Public Law 107-110, into law on January 8, 2002. The passage reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Part A of

Title IV of ESEA, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community Act, supported drug and violence prevention programs. Section 4126 authorized a community service grant program (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

For the purpose of the grant, effective community service programs are likely to:

Be based on sound research and include an evaluation component;

Feature a tracking system to ensure that students complete community service requirements and return to the education mainstream in a timely manner;

Involve schools, community organizations, parents and students in the design and implementations of the programs;

Engage youth in meaningful and positive activities;

Provide troubled youth with consistent support, opportunities, and skills for successful futures. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 7)

The purpose of the Community Service Grant Program is to implement and coordinate programs with meaningful activities to serve students expelled or suspended from school. The Community Service Grant Program involves the community organizations and parents. The design and implementation of the program engage youth in meaningful and positive activities, and provide the troubled youth with consistent support skills for successful futures (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The Community Service Grant Program focuses primarily on outreach and service. Participants receive no course credit toward graduation because the program is not curriculum-based (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Students spend their time at community agencies but have an opportunity to complete homework (NCDJDP, 2002). A Community Service Grant Program might involve students engaging in cleaning and

polishing in a local agency or school and may take place on weekends or during the school day. A school-based community service might operate as supervised weekend jobs performed by juvenile offenders assigned by the court system or students with discipline issues (Moles, 1990). Hired college students can supervise the campus community service and serve as positive role models for the students.

The Department of Education at the University of Arizona, at the Mega Conference in Florida in 2003 and the Annual Meeting of American Researcher in Toronto, Canada in 2005, presented features of effective community service, characteristics of effective community service, and the mechanism for change through community service. These findings are also available on the Community Service Suspensions Options Programs (n.d.). Effective community service programs have work performed in a context of human interaction to facilitate bonding and role modeling by linking the student with pro-social adults (Bazemore & Maloney, 1994). The projects have a clear beginning and end that will allow the student to feel a sense of accomplishment (Bosworth, Ford, & Anderson, 2003). The focus of community service should be on the quality and completion of assigned work to help the student feel that he/she is necessary for completing a needed job and the service performed is meaningful. The service needs to meet a clearly defined need that is obvious to the student (Bazemore & Maloney).

The work site should have adequate notice to arrange appropriate work and supervision. The supervisor should be willing to work with teenagers and willing to expend efforts to make the community service experience positive (e.g. training and monitoring the student interacting, and serving as a role model). The supervisor should hold the student accountable, even when the student is resistant, and have the support and

backup from someone in authority to deal with uncooperative students or problems that arise. Students should be adequately prepared for the work they are to perform, receive ongoing feedback and opportunities for input during the service, and have an opportunity for reflection or debriefing about the experience afterwards (Bosworth et al., 2003).

Commitment to and learning from the experience is promoted by giving the student input into designing and carrying out the project (Bazemore & Maloney, 1994). The service should have some connection to the infraction, to skills the student needs to learn, or to interests or future career goals. From a restorative justice paradigm, the service should be performed in the community where the offense was committed and there should be at least a symbolic link between the offense and the community service. The term of service should be proportional to the harm caused by the offense (Bazemore & Maloney). For middle school students, volunteer experience that promoted a sense of autonomy and connection with others resulted in lower levels of problem behaviors, suggesting that these are developmental needs of young adolescents (Allen, Kuperminc, Philliber, & Herre, 1994). Quality is more important than the quantity of hours. Students' ratings of the quality of volunteer experience had a greater effect on program outcome than new raw numbers of hours of volunteer service (Allen et al., 1994).

In North Carolina, the passage of Senate Bill 71 (SB 71) on June 11, 2002, led to the identification of short-term out-of-school suspension programs that would serve as pilot programs for other school systems to consider while emphasizing community service as a component (NCDJDP, 2003). The North Carolina Community Service Programs' objective is to provide suspended students opportunities to serve their community.

The Burke County Alternative to Suspension (BATS) is a community service-

based program. Several non-profit organizations provide work sites for students to perform community service for suspensions ranging from 3 to 10 days. Students who have a high risk of academic failure, involvement in the court system, potential for dropping out of school, and the possibility of developing inappropriate behaviors and poor health habits receive consideration for participation in the BATS program. The BATS program provides an alternative to out-of-school suspension that does not interrupt the academic process of the student and provides structured supervised activities for suspended students (Burke County Public Schools, 2005).

The school administrator decides if the student is eligible to participate in the BATS program. If the parent agrees, two events occur: The BATS district program coordinator receives notification to assign the student a work site, and the student's teachers receive an assignment request. The parent is responsible for transporting the student to the work site, being present at the initial intake at the work site, and providing snacks and lunch (Burke County Public Schools, 2005).

On the job site, students participating in the program complete homework assignments, receive counseling, and interact with positive contacts within the community service organization. At the end of the day, the site coordinator evaluates the performance of the student and faxes this information back to the school administrator (Burke County Public Schools, 2005).

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD, n.d.) Community Service Program Brochure is also a community service alternative to suspension program. The process for intake is three-fold: The student receives a referral that results in a suspension; the administrator presents the opportunity to participate in the community service program; and if the student accepts, the administrator refers the student to the community service

coordinator who approves the referral and assigns the student to one of the community service sites. The student performs the community service depending upon the need of the community. Once a student commits to participate in the program, he/she commits time and effort to a nonprofit organization. The student agrees to “view assignment as a positive choice and a way to mend fences” (BVSD, para. 5). Students are to take responsibility for the completion of the job, along with paper or assignments that accompany the process (BVSD).

The Support on Suspension (SOS) is a community service program in Fairfax County, Virginia. Developed by the Fairfax Partnership for Youth, the program’s goal is “to encourage the development and availability of safe places supervised by caring adults, as an alternative to suspended youth being home alone or out in the community during school hours” (Fairfax Partnership for Youth, n.d., p. 1). The SOS program provides middle and high school students with academic assistance, conflict resolution, and better choices while they are suspended from school (Fairfax Partnership for Youth).

Academic-Focused Program

Academic-focused alternative to suspension programs utilize the traditional school approach. The students spend the day in a special self-contained room located on the campus and sometimes off campus. The academic-focused out-of-school suspension was first introduced in the 1960s. Facilities are usually off campus and the students complete the assignments forwarded to them from their classroom teachers (NCDJJDP, 2002). In some programs, the students study reading, language arts, and math, regardless of the regular school classes (Kyrene School District No. 28, n.d., p. 2). In addition to the academics, some of the programs contain a community service and counseling component (NCDJJDP).

The Warren County Kentucky Public School Alternative to Suspension Program's mission is to provide academic and behavioral mentoring in a safe and challenging learning environment to reduce inappropriate behaviors that impede learning in the home school. The Warren County Alternative to Suspension Program employs a full-time counselor and two teachers. The students receive counseling at the center and when they return to the home school. The student participates in academics, counseling and community service while they attend the center (Warren County Public Schools, n.d.)

Counseling-Focused Alternative to Suspension

Counseling is a short-term interpersonal theory based on professional activity guided by the ethical and legal standards that focus on helping individuals to resolve developmental and situational problem solving (Gladding, 1992). Counseling is implemented when discipline does not change behaviors. C. H. Wolfgang implemented a behavior management approach, which integrated philosophy and the theory of counseling. Wolfgang referred to this approach as the three faces of discipline. The three faces are the relationship-listening face, confronting-confronting face, and the rules and consequence face (Tan, 2002).

Tan (2002) cited Wolfgang (1999) as stating, "The Relationship-Listening Face is a therapeutic process that involves minimal power" (p. 3). The relationship-listening philosophy focuses on the student possessing the authority to change their own behavior when mistakes occur and to talk about the behaviors, to develop insights, and become more focused on their behavior (Tan).

The confronting-confronting face allows the students, with the help of the counselor, to decide how they will change and to live up to the mutual agreement of change. This approach allows the students to express their ideas, reflect on their

behaviors, and make choices on whether or not to change their behaviors. The concept of the confronting-confronting face is to “empower individuals to manage their problems” (Tan, 2002, p. 3).

The third face of discipline is the rules and consequence face. According to Tan (2002), Wolfgang (1999) defined it as “a controlling process” (p. 6).

Programs with a counseling component focus on behavior modification. These programs concentrate on family, student, and parent counseling. Parents and students attend group sessions in anger management and parenting skills. The scope of the program determines where the sessions will take place. The counseling programs also provide time for academics and community outreach (NCDJJD, 2002). Project STRIDE: Wilson County, North Carolina, was a counseling-focused alternative to suspension program that operated in Wilson County, North Carolina. The program was a collaborative effort between the Wilson County School system and a community-counseling agency. Project STRIDE was located in a facility off campus and accommodated students in Grades 6 through 9. The program allowed the students the opportunity to complete daily assignments. The major focus of the program was behavior modification. Students engaged in problem solving, decision making, and other life skills. Students received credit for attendance and homework for successfully completing the program (NCDJJD, 2002).

Evaluation

Evaluation is a form of applied research that focuses on only one curriculum, one project, one program, and one lesson (Worthen & Sanders, 1973). According to Dressel (1976), evaluation is “a judgment on the worth or impact of a program, a price procedure, or individual, and the process by which the judgment is made” (p. 1). Evaluation is the

determination of the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program, product or the potential utility of alternative approach designed to attain specified objectives (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004).

Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991) cited Scriven's (1980) definition as "evaluation is what it is, the determination of the merit or worth and what it is used for is another matter" (p. 75). In 1967, Scriven introduced the terms summative and formative evaluations. A formative evaluation is ongoing and takes place during the development of a particular program. The formative evaluation requires the stakeholders to make a judgment regarding the worth or value of a program regardless of the implementation. The formative evaluation provides information on improving the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). The summative evaluation implementation occurs at the completion of the program in addition to providing information about what to modify within the program (Shadish et al.).

Stufflebeam's (2000) definition of evaluation was "Evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives" (p. 129). Stufflebeam also presented four key points in reference to the definition of evaluation.

1. Evaluation is performed in the service of decision making, hence, it should provide information which is useful to decision-makers.
2. Evaluation is a cyclic, continuing process and, therefore, must be implemented through a systematic program.
3. The evaluation process includes the three main steps of delineating, obtaining [, sic] and providing. These steps provide the basis for methodology of evaluation.

4. The delineating and providing steps in the evaluation process are interface activities requiring collaboration between evaluator and decision-maker, while the obtaining step is largely a technical activity which is executed mainly by the evaluator. (pp. 129-130)

Development of Evaluation Models

The purpose of an evaluation model is to describe or prescribe what evaluators should do because an evaluator's interest lies in determining the status or value of an object. The prescriptive model is a set of rules that specify a good evaluation and the condition of conducting a good evaluation and the descriptive model is a set of statements that describe, predict or explain evaluation activities. The models provide insight and the outline for conducting an evaluation. Some evaluations are directed at evaluating reaching, learning, and curriculum while others concentrate on decision-making processes which manage education (Alkin & Ellett, 1990).

“The prescriptive model prescribes activities which are good, bad, right, wrong, adequate, inadequate, rational or irrational, just or unjust” (Alkin & Ellett, 1990, p. 18). The model concentrates on the responsibilities, obligations, and duties of the evaluator. Prescriptive models offer recommendations and warnings for conducting an evaluation, often point out problems, risk, demands, and limitations, and operate on the empirical, valuation, and purposive characteristics. The empirical characteristic or methodology focuses on describing or explaining various aspects of educational phenomenon. Valuation concentrates on determining the value of the object and the purposive evaluation model pertains to the evaluation functions and purposes. “Evaluations involve some type of methodology, all necessitate the valuing of data, and all evaluations are conducted with some use in mind” (Alkin & Ellett, p.18).

The descriptive model is a set of empirical statements containing generalizations for describing, predicting or explaining evaluation activities. The descriptive model is also the evaluation theory model. In addition to providing information pertaining to evaluation activities, the descriptive model provides limitations and possibilities for the prescriptive models (Alkin & Ellett, 1990).

Program Evaluations

“Program evaluation has come into being as both formal educational activity and as a frequently mandated instrument of public policy” (Worthen, 1990, p. 42). Since evaluations concentrate on the worth of a thing, a program evaluation judges the “worth or utility of a program” (Worthen, p. 42). Worthen cited Anderson and Ball (1978) as describing the six major purposes for conducting a program evaluation. They are:

1. to contribute to decision about program installation;
2. to contribute to decision about program continuation, explanation, or “certification;”
3. to contribute to decisions about program modifications;
4. to obtain evidence to rally support for a program;
5. to obtain evidence to rally opposition to a program;
6. to contribute to the understanding of basic psychological, social, and other processes (only rarely can this purpose be achieved in a progress evaluation without compromising more basic evaluation purposes). (Worthen, p. 42)

Standards for Program Evaluations

“A standard is a principle mutually agreed upon by people engaged in a professional practice, that, if met will enhance the quality and fairness of that professional practice, for example evaluation” (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation [Joint

Committee], 1981, p. 12). The Joint Committee proposed 30 standards for program evaluation in 1981 to describe the criteria for educational research. The Joint Committee proposed that a good evaluation should satisfy the criteria of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. Utility standards serve the informational needs by stakeholder. The standard includes “audience identification, evaluator credibility, information and scope selection, value identification, report clarity, report timeliness and dissemination, and evaluation impact” (Joint Committee, p. 13). The standard of feasibility recognizes that the research must take place in a “natural” setting and that resources will be used, and addresses “practical procedure,” “political validity,” and “cost effectiveness” (Joint Committee). Propriety in evaluation entails that the evaluation be conducted in a legal and ethical manner. Accuracy in evaluation ensures that the evaluation has produced sound information (Joint Committee).

Program Evaluation Theories

R. W. Tyler (1942) popularized the 1930s objective-oriented evaluation approach (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Tyler proposed evaluation to be a process for determining the extent to which objectives of a program or curriculum are accomplished. The main purpose was to determine the extent of goal achievement through the specifications of the objective and student outcomes. Therefore, the Tyler model of evaluation used pre and posttests to evaluate student work. The evaluation provided information on the attainment of the objectives and this data provided the decision maker with data for the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the course or curriculum in question. The Tyler method is easy to assess if goals are accomplished and it is easy to design evaluation studies and focuses on the definition of the objectives (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). The name of the approach is the Tylerian Evaluation. The approach was developed during the

Eight Year Study of the late 1930s (Smith & Tyler, 1942). The Tyler evaluation approach consisted of several steps:

1. Establish goals and objectives.
2. Classify the goals and objectives.
3. Define the objectives in behavioral terms.
4. Find situations in which achievement of the objectives can be shown.
5. Develop or select measurement techniques.
6. Collect performance data.
7. Compare performance data and behaviorally stated objectives.

(Fitzpatrick et al., p. 72)

Modifications are necessary when discrepancies exist between performance and objectives. Tyler's approach was scientifically acceptable, reliable, easy to adopt and a great influence on other educational theorists (Worthen et al., 1997).

The Tyler method has limitations. First, the method oversimplifies the program and focuses on the terminal rather than the ongoing and pre-program information. Second, much of the attention is focused on the objectives and worth is de-emphasized (Worthen & Sanders, 1973).

The Provus Evaluation Model is another objectives-oriented evaluation model based on the concept of "continuous information management" (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 68). Provus (1973) viewed evaluation as "a way of agreeing on standards, determining where discrepancies exist between performance and some aspect of a program and the standard set for performances and using information about discrepancies to determine whether to improve, maintain or terminate the program" (Worthen & Sanders, p. 68). In addition to comparing standards, Provus also described the four stages

and a fifth optional stage of program development. Provus referred to the stages as definition, installation, process, product, and added a fifth stage of cost development.

The first stage, definition, involved defining goals, processes, and delineating resources as the major emphases. Provus (1973) considered educational programs as a series of “inputs (antecedents), processes, and outputs (outcomes)” with standards established for each component of the series that serve as the bases for additional evaluations (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 68). The evaluator’s responsibility is to prepare reliable program specifications (Worthen & Sanders).

Installation was the second stage. The evaluator performs tests that identify discrepancies that exist between what is expected and the actual outcome. Provus stated that discrepancies at this stage should result in redefining the specifications, readjusting installation, or terminating the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004).

Process was the third stage. Information on the participants is gathered to determine if there is an “enabling objective” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004, p. 76). The enabling objectives refer to gains that should be attained. If the objectives are not met, they need to be “redefined “or “revised.” The program validity needs to be questioned and a decision made on whether or not “to terminate the program if the discrepancy cannot be eliminated” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004; Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 69).

Product was the fourth stage. The evaluator then determines if the outcomes are “terminal” or “ultimate.” Terminal outcomes are immediate outcomes and ultimate objectives are long-term. Provus (1973) suggested that the evaluator “go beyond the end of program evaluation and perform follow-up activities with routine evaluation studies” (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 69).

Finally, the cost-benefit stage examined the results of the program being

evaluated with similar programs (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004).

The original plan of the discrepancy model was to facilitate the development of educational plans in large school districts with a major focus on discrepancies to aid developers in proceeding toward the attainment of program objectives. The model emphasized the use of a “cooperative problem-solving process” to identify and rectify discrepancies before moving to the next stage (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 69).

Decision-Oriented Evaluations

Borich (1990) defined decision-oriented evaluations as a process that produces information for selecting among alternative courses of action (p. 31). Borich continued by stating “evaluations are decisions oriented if it services a decision, implies a choice among alternatives, and is used in committing resources for the next interval of time before another decision is made” (p. 31). In addition to defining decision-oriented evaluations, Borich also provided characteristics of evaluation decision makers.

First, the decision maker determines what is to be evaluated and the measure to be used. Second the evaluator serves as the advisor. Third, the evaluation consists of collecting and reporting information. Fourth, the information gathered must be relevant for the decision. Last, important information is dictated by the decision (Borich, 1990, p. 33).

The Management-Oriented Evaluation Approach

“The Management-Oriented Approach is meant to serve the decision maker” (Worthen & Sanders, 1987, p. 77). The greatest strength of the managerial model is that focus is given to the evaluation. The evaluator decides what information is essential and focuses on the needs of the decision maker. Managerial decision making reiterates the importance of utility of information. Focusing on the evaluation is instrumental in

keeping the decision managers on task (Worthen et al., 1997). The management-oriented decision model is also important because the evaluation can begin at any time, supports every component of the evaluation, and provides timely feedback. The Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model utilizes the managerial-decision approach (Worthen et al.).

CIPP Model

Daniel Stufflebeam developed the CIPP model in the late 1960s. The CIPP Model was probably the first sophisticated model for program evaluation and was probably the most elaborate and thought-out model. The model emphasized systematic procedures to cover the complex efforts for program evaluation and emphasized evaluation for support of decision making. CIPP is an acronym for Context, Input, Process, and Product (Gall et al., 2003; Gredler, 1996; Stufflebeam, 2000; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Worthen et al., 1997).

Stufflebeam (2000) stated, “the context evaluation assesses the needs, problems, and approaches within a defined environment” (p. 287). Often referred to as a needs assessment, the context evaluation contains five objectives. The context evaluation describes the perspective for the intended service, identifies the intended beneficiaries, identifies problems or barriers to meeting the needs, identifies area assets and funding opportunities that can be used to address the targeted needs, and assesses the clarity and appropriateness of the instructional program or order of service (Stufflebeam, p. 287). The context is the most basic in that it determines the rationale for the objective and can be implemented at any stage of the program. When initiated before the program is implemented, the context evaluation is used in goal and priority setting. During the program, context is used in combination with the input, process, and product evaluations

(Gall et al., 2003; Gredler, 1996; Stufflebeam; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Worthen et al., 1997).

The main objective of the input evaluation is to determine ways to improve the existing program (Stufflebeam, 2000). Gall et al. (2003) stated “Input evaluations deal with issues as to whether certain resources are too expensive, how well particular strategies are likely to be achieved and how best to utilize certain strategies” (p. 561). The evaluator should first look at the goals. Stufflebeam (1967) described the method for identifying and assessing relevant capabilities of the responsible agency and strategies for achieving the objective. The input evaluation provides information for deciding whether outside assistance should be employed for the adoption of available solutions and what designs or procedural plans should be employed for implementing selected strategies (Gall et al., 2003; Gredler, 1996; Stufflebeam, 2000; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Worthen et al., 1997).

The process evaluation provides feedback to the individuals responsible for implementing plans and procedures. The process evaluation detects product defects in the procedural design or its implementation during the implementation stages. Input provides information for program decisions and maintains a record of procedures as they occur. Process evaluation has four essential features: full-time process evaluation, instruments for describing process, regular feedback meetings, and frequent updating process design. Process evaluation is an ongoing implementation of the plan. It is used to monitor the daily operation of the program and to keep records of program events over time (Gall et al., 2003, p. 561).

The objective of the product evaluation is to interpret and judge achievement of the program. The program evaluation is to ensure that the needs of the beneficiaries are

met. It is important to receive feedback on the achievement during different phases of the program in order to assess outcomes, whether positive or negative, or the unintended or intended and long-term outcomes. The evaluator gathers and analyzes decisions concerning the program and supplies the stakeholder with information on the attainment of goals, costs, and whether or not the outcomes are related to the goals. The evaluator's responsibility is also to determine if poor implementation caused poor outcomes and to view the program from the information provided from the context, input, and process evaluations. Evaluators employ a variety of techniques for comprehensive outcome assessments. Submission of the evaluation findings can occur during any stage of the program (Gall et al., 2003; Gredler, 1996; Stufflebeam, 2000; Worthen & Sanders, 1987; Worthen et al., 1997).

The Discrepancy Evaluation Model

The Design Evaluation of the Discrepancy Model was implemented in the evaluation of the UCATS Program. The Discrepancy Model consists of four evaluations: design, input, process and outcome. The Design Model evaluates the program plan to determine if the plan is appropriate for the known needs, if the plan is comprehensive, if it is related to the needs, and if it possesses construct validity. In this study the researcher was interested in seeking information about the relationship needs and appropriateness of the UCATS program.

Steinmetz (2000) defined the input evaluation as the "availability" of necessary resources, "the extent to which program resources are deployed," and the extent to which the preconditions are met (p. 139). The process evaluation determines whether the planned activities are carried out as outlined in the design evaluation. The evaluation also specifies if the plans are of the quality expected in the design evaluation (Steinmetz,

2000). The outcome evaluation is utilized to determine if the planned results are achieved (Steinmetz).

Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature related to alternatives to out-of-school suspension programs. The alternatives to suspension programs discussed were in-school suspension (ISS), before and after school detention, and Saturday School. In-school suspension requires additional staff and an isolated room in the building for the students to report. The student assigned to ISS misses instructional time. Students assigned to detention and Saturday School do not miss instructional time but require staff and parental participation. One drawback for both Saturday School and detention is parental tardiness in bringing or picking up the students.

Additionally, the literature described academic, counseling, behavioral, and community service alternatives to suspension. Academic alternatives offer the same accommodations as traditional school. The students spend time at on-campus or off-campus sites where they focus on academics. Some programs provide counseling and community service in addition to the academic component. Other programs provide counseling as the primary focus and concentrate on assisting the individuals to resolve developmental and situational problem solving.

Community Service is another type of alternative to suspension program. Community service focuses on outreach and service. The participants do not receive credit towards graduation requirements since the program is not curriculum-based. Opportunities, however, are provided for the completion of homework.

The later part of the Chapter defined evaluations and described the Tyler (1942) Provus (1973), and Stufflebeam (2000) evaluation models. Evaluation is defined as a

form of applied research that focuses on a curriculum, project, or program. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the worth of a program or curriculum. The Tyler model proposed that evaluation is a process for determining the extent to which the objectives of a program are accomplished. The Tyler model used pre and posttests to evaluate student work. Tyler's model was the first. The Provus evaluation method determined discrepancies in the performance and the standards set for the performances. This information is used to determine whether to improve, maintain, or terminate the program evaluated. The CIPP model emphasized evaluation for decision making. The model emphasized systematic procedures to cover a complex evaluations model. The model was divided into four specific evaluations. The context evaluation is the needs assessment. Consideration is given to the problems and opportunities within the environment. The input evaluation determines ways to improve the existing program and makes judgment about the resources and strategies to achieve the project objectives. The process evaluation provides feedback for implementing plans and procedures. It also detects flaws in procedural design and implementation. The product evaluation is to judge the achievement of the program goals. The discrepancy model is divided into four stages. The design evaluation examines the program plan for appropriateness; the input evaluation examines the availability and utilization of the resources; the process examines the implementation of the plan; and the output evaluation determines if the planned results have been achieved.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This Chapter describes the research methods and designs utilized in the evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program (UCATS). The Chapter identifies the participants and describes the instrumentation, data collection, analysis method, and limitations of the study.

Using the original goals and objectives of the program, the researcher answered the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives of the program?
2. What are the perceptions of the stakeholders, students, parents, administrators, teachers, UCATS staff and community partners of the UCATS Program?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

Participants

The participants in this study were the students from schools A and B who participated in the UCATS Program, parents of student participants, teachers, administrators, counselors at both schools A and B, and the community partners who gave the students real-life experiences in the field.

Procedure

The researcher first obtained permission from the superintendent to conduct the research (Appendix B). When permission was granted, the researcher contacted the principals for schools A and B and confirmed a time to distribute permission forms to students, parents, and administrators (Appendix C). The researcher developed surveys and interview questions for stakeholders (board members) (Appendix D), students (Appendix E), parents (Appendix F), teachers (Appendix G), school administrators

(Appendix H), UCATS counselors/coordinator (Appendix I), and business partners/agencies (Appendix J). The researcher attempted to understand the successes or failures of the UCATS Program by utilizing surveys and interviews. An experienced professor of education with public school experience validated the surveys and interview questions for content.

Research Question 1

To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives of the program? The seven objectives to the program were addressed in the following manner:

Objective: To develop a traditional out-of-school suspension. The UCATS Program goals and characteristics were compared to the literature description of a community service alternative to suspension program. The researcher wrote a narrative that described any discrepancies in the literature description of an alternative to suspension program and the UCATS Program.

Objective: To ensure that students are constructively occupied during suspension. The researcher interviewed and surveyed the students, the UCATS staff, and community business/agency partners to ensure that students were actively engaged in performing tasks assigned by the work site supervisors. A narrative was written describing the extent to which the students performed the duties assigned by the supervisor at the job site.

Objective: To avoid interruption and deterioration in the student academic process. The researcher examined the student's report cards. The researcher also wrote a narrative that described if the student's academic process deteriorated after the student participated in the UCATS Program.

Objective: To prevent and deter potential student involvement in the juvenile court system. The researcher examined archival data from juvenile court or police records

and reported on the number of students arrested before and after the UCATS Program was implemented.

Objective: To provide individual counseling for each student. The researcher interviewed the students and UCATS staff to determine if students received counseling and a narrative on the responses to the counseling questions and reported any discrepancy between the UCATS staff and the students.

Objective: To give students real world experiences that relate to their learning. The students, the UCATS staff, and the community service partners were interviewed and surveyed. The researcher reported the responses to questions pertaining to the real-life experiences and compared students, UCATS staff, and the community business/agency partners.

Objective: To increase self-esteem and increase self-respect. The researcher surveyed the students, parents and the UCATS staff and compared the responses of the students, parents, and UCATS staff.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of the students, parents, teachers, administrators, UCATS staff and community business/agency partners? Students at schools A and B who participated in the UCATS Program were given a student survey to complete. The survey contained questions that measured the student's perception of the UCATS Program. Each statement had five responses that corresponded to a five-point Likert scale. The choices corresponded to the following: The directions were clear and the statements contained appropriate vocabulary and language. The statements values were: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. The second section of the survey consisted of open-ended questions and one item that required the students to rank the

various alternatives to suspension programs. The open-ended portion allowed the students to express their concerns in their own words. The last section of the survey asked the students to submit demographic information.

The researcher developed a questionnaire for the businesses/agencies participating in the UCATS Program. In addition, parents of these students were given a survey to determine their perception of the UCATS Program and its influence on their student's success. The researcher, for additional information related to the UCATS Program, interviewed a group of students who participated in the program. Teachers, school administrators, and counselors at schools A and B were asked to complete a perception survey of the UCATS Program at a faculty meeting. Community business/agency partners were randomly selected to participate in an interview/questionnaire related to the UCATS Program and their perception of its success with students.

Research Question 3

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? The open-ended questions of the survey completed by the students, parents, teachers, administrators, UCATS staff, and the community business partners were examined. The researcher compared the responses of the students, parents, teachers, administrators, UCATS staff, and community service partners.

Limitations

The program evaluation had several limitations. First, the program evaluation was limited to two high schools in Union County. Information was not gathered from the other high schools or schools outside of the county. Second, the program was also limited to the students who were eligible to participate in the UCATS Program. Third, the study was limited to the parents, students, teachers, UCATS staff, school administrators, and

business personnel who volunteered to participate in the study. Since the survey was voluntary, some choose not to participate.

Chapter 4: Results

The study served as an evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program (UCATS). The results of the data collected from surveys, interviews, and document reviews were described. Using the original goals and objectives of the UCATS Program, the researcher answered the following questions.

1. To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives of the Program?
2. What are the perceptions of the stakeholders, students, parents, administrators, teachers, UCATS staff, and community business partners of the UCATS Program as related to the desired outcomes?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

Participants

The participants in this study included suspended students who participated in the UCATS Program and their parents for both schools A and B. In addition, the faculty and administration from both schools A and B participated. Finally, the 28 business partners who formed the school district's business-community partnerships were asked to participate as well. The response of students and parents was far less than expected. School A only had three students and three parents participate and school B had six students and six parents participate. The faculty at each of the schools participated with 50 of 61 faculty members participating from school A and 49 of 85 participating from school B. Of the 102 community-business partners in the district, 28 participated in the study.

Research Question 1

To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives of the

program? The survey was administered to members of the board of education stakeholders (N=3) who presented the information on an existing alternative to suspension program to the superintendent at the time of the planning for the UCATS Program. It produced the following results. Table 3 reports the mean responses for each of the questions presented to the stakeholders.

Table 3

Stakeholder Survey Means and Standard Deviations

	Mean	S.D.
Over 4,500 students in Union County received out-of-school suspensions in the 2002-2003 school year.	3.33	1.15
Students consistently fail to make up work when they are suspended.	4.33	.58
Students consistently failed due to excessive absences when they are suspended.	4.33	.58
Suspended students have low self-esteem.	4.00	1.00
An alternative to out-of-school suspension is needed.	5.00	.00

The average responses of the three participants indicated some mixed perceptions of the condition of the suspension program at the time UCATS was adopted. The only question with responses in unison was the question related to the need for an alternative to out-of-school suspension. Table 4 presents more detailed information related to the individual responses from the stakeholders.

Table 4

Stakeholder Survey Frequency Distribution

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
Over 4,500 students in Union County received out-of-school suspensions in the 2002-2003 school year.		1		2	
Students consistently fail to make up work when they are suspended.				2	1
Students consistently failed due to excessive absences when they are suspended.				2	1
Suspended students have low self-esteem.			1	1	1
An alternative to out-of-school suspension is needed.					3

Objective: To develop an alternative to traditional out-of-school suspension. Data for this objective were collected by surveys administered to the stakeholders and three members of the board of education, by UCATS document analysis, along with the results of a literature review that identified characteristics of effective out-of-school suspension programs.

Objective: To ensure students are constructively occupied during the suspension. Data collected from interviews and surveys of community business/agency partners,

students, and the UCATS staff provided information related to the engagement of students at the work site.

Based on student interviews, community-business partner interviews, and regularly scheduled visits to the work sites, the data showed that students were actively engaged in a variety of tasks throughout the day. A member of the community-business partnership supervised the active engagement of the students who were assigned to the site.

Objective: To avoid interruption and deterioration of the student's academic process. The researcher analyzed documents to provide data to examine this objective. Student participant report cards were analyzed to determine if the student's academic process was interrupted while he/she participated in the UCATS Program.

During the 2006-2007 school year, this objective was changed and the sentence that referred to the deterioration of the student's academic process was eliminated. No documentation of the student's progress during the first year of the program exists. The researcher utilized the report cards of the students who participated in the survey to show how the students performed in their classes before and after participating in the UCATS Program. Table 5 presents the achievement data for the students participating in the survey.

Table 5

Grades of Students Participating in Perception Survey

Student	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level	Courses	Grades Pre-UCATS	Grades Post-UCATS	Change
1	Female	African American	9	Course 1	88	98	10
				Course 2	80	88	8
				Course 3	91	85	-6
				Course 4	85	88	3
2	Female	Hispanic	9	Course 1	86	85	-1
				Course 2	90	95	5
				Course 3	64	61	-3
				Course 4	95	88	-7
3	Male	African American	11	Course 1	69	87	18
				Course 2	78	77	-1
				Course 3	82	80	-2
				Course 4	89	73	-16
4	Female	African American	12	Course 1	97	93	-4
				Course 2	90	78	-12
				Course 3	85	75	-10
				Course 4	89	87	-2
5	Female	Caucasian	12	Course 1	98	95	-3
				Course 2	82	70	-12
				Course 3	96	81	-15
				Course 4	77	68	-9
6	Male	Caucasian	11	Course 1	83	85	2
				Course 2	93	93	0
				Course 3	86	90	4
				Course 4	100	100	0
7	Female	Caucasian	9	Course 1	85	78	-7
				Course 2	93	94	1
				Course 3	89	83	-6
				Course 4	97	93	-4
8	Female	Caucasian	12	Course 1	88	85	-3
				Course 2	95	99	4
				Course 3	94	95	1
				Course 4	97	92	-5
9	Female	Caucasian	11	Course 1	77	74	-3
				Course 2	85	82	-3
				Course 3	86	79	-7
				Course 4	93	81	-12

The data in Table 5 showed that only one student's grades did not change or

improved slightly after participating in the UCATS Program. The grades of four students decreased in all courses by two to fifteen points after participation in the UCATS Program. One student's grades decreased by three to five points in two courses and one student's grades decreased by six points in one course and increased by three to ten points in the other courses.

Objective: To prevent and deter potential student involvement in the juvenile court system. The process used to determine if there was a decrease in student involvement with the juvenile court system was an examination of police records, court records, and the Union County Disciplined Juvenile Annual Report. Table 6 presents the number of interactions of juveniles with the criminal justice system by year.

Table 6

Disciplined Juvenile Complaints in Union County

Year	Number of Disciplined Complaints
2004	340
2005	462
2006	585
2007	750
2008	484

(North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008).

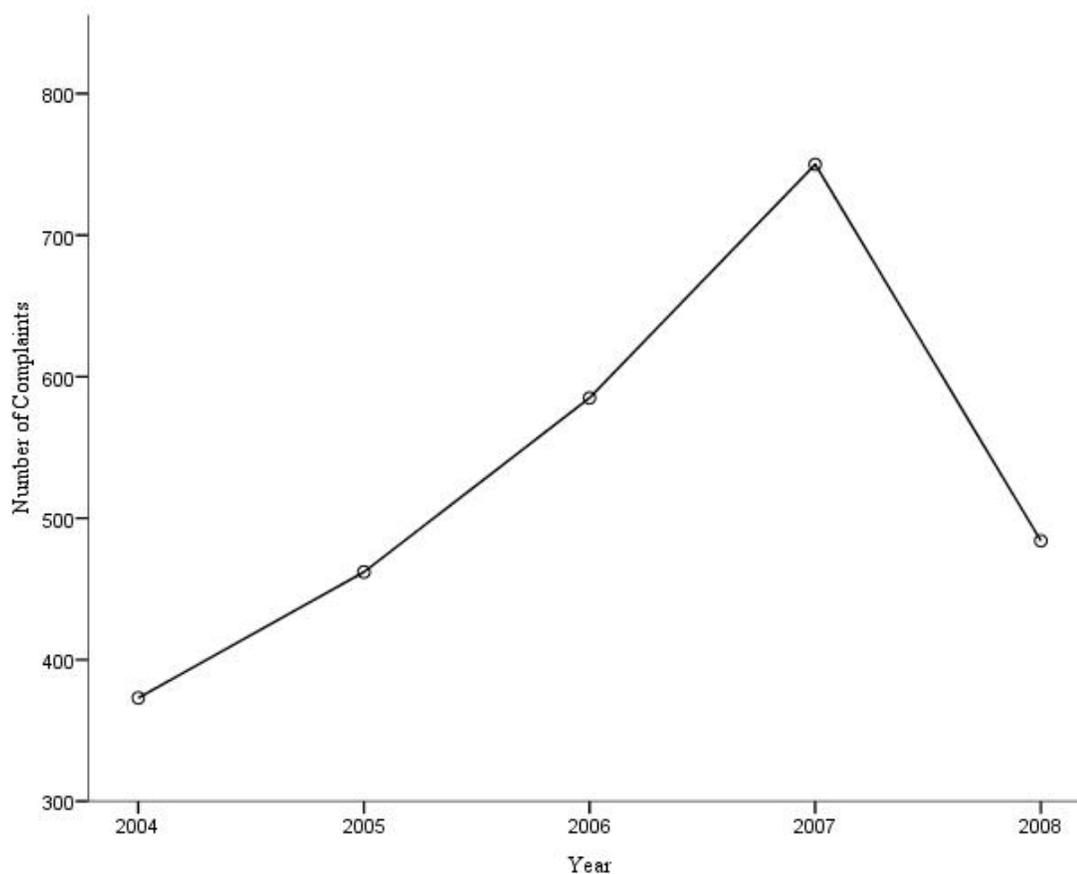


Figure. Juvenile Complaints by Year.

The data in Table 6 and the graph in the Figure clearly show an increase in complaints peaking in 2007 to 750 and dropping dramatically in 2008 to 484 complaints.

Objective: To provide individual counseling for each student. The data source used to determine if this objective was met came from interviews with the UCATS staff, parents of UCATS students, and student participants. The UCATS staff indicated that they used the “Nurtured Heart Approach” and “Solution-Focused Belief Therapy” to counsel students who participated in the UCATS Program. The Nurtured Heart Approach seeks to reach the inner wealth within each student and the Solution-Focused Therapy builds on the past successes of each student and focuses on immediate behavioral

improvement. The amount of time counselors spent with students varied among students and the circumstances of the counseling sessions. The survey indicated that all students agreed that they had received counseling during the UCATS Program; however, 66.7% (N=6) indicated that they strongly agreed that they had received excellent counseling. Parents did not completely agree with the students related to counseling. Only 66.7% (N=9) of the parents who answered the survey agreed that their child had received excellent counseling. Table 7 shows the data for students and parents.

Table 7

Student and Parent Responses to Excellent Counseling

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Students believe excellent counseling provided.			3		6
Parents believe excellent counseling provided.				3	6

During the interviews, students disagreed with their responses on the survey with respect to receiving counseling. The students did agree that they had spoken with either a woman from the program or the boss of the program although they were working but did not perceive this to be counseling. Table 8 gives the detailed responses for the student survey.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Student Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
You were happy with your work site placement.			1	2	6
You felt safe at the work site.				1	8
You received excellent counseling at your work site.				3	6
The adults at the work site were positive role models.					9
The work site was a possible future career pathway.				1	8
You were allowed to complete your homework assignments.				2	7
You turned in your assignment when you returned to school.				1	8
You attended tutoring sessions upon your return to school.	3	2			3
You exhibited a positive attitude toward school after you returned to school.	6		1		1
The counseling helped to improve your self-esteem.		1	1	4	3
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension.			1		8
You were offered UCATS on your _____ suspension.	7		1	1	

Objective: To give students real world experiences that can relate to their education. The researcher analyzed the data from the student interviews in order to

determine if this objective was reached. The interviews resulted in the students responding with remarks that clearly indicated that they were constantly engaged in activities that they may face in the real world.

Objective: To enhance self-esteem and increase self-respect. The researcher analyzed the data from student and parent surveys and the UCATS staff interviews and surveys to assess whether this objective was met. Table 9 represents the data from the student and parent surveys for the single question on each survey that related to self-esteem. The data clearly showed that for those who responded to the student survey, approximately 78% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that the UCATS Program improved their self-esteem.

Table 9

Student and Parent Responses to Increased Self-Esteem

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
The counseling helped to improve your self-esteem.		1	1	4	3
The counseling helped to improve your child's self-esteem.			3	2	4

Of the nine parents who responded to the survey, six responded in the affirmative that the UCATS Program improved their child's self-esteem.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of the students, parents, administrators, teachers,

UCATS staff, and community partners of the UCATS Program as it relates to the desired outcomes? An analysis of mean responses for students, parents, administrators, and teachers was conducted to answer Research Question 2. The results of the student responses are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Student Survey Responses

	Mean	S. D.
You were happy with your work site placement.	4.556	.726
You felt safe at the work site.	4.889	.333
You received excellent counseling at your work site.	4.667	.500
The adults at the work site were positive role models.	5.000	.000
The work site provided real world experiences that are related to prior learning.	4.889	.333
You were allowed to complete your homework assignments.	4.778	.441
You turned in your assignment when you returned to school.	4.889	.333
You attended tutoring sessions upon your return to school.	2.750	1.909
You did not exhibit a positive attitude toward school after you returned to school.	2.444	2.506
The counseling helped to improve your self-esteem.	4.000	1.000
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension.	4.778	.667
You were offered UCATS on your ____ suspension.	1.556	1.130

The data showed that students rated the questions related to UCATS positively. In

nine of twelve questions, the average responses indicated that students responded between agree and strongly agree. When asked about tutoring sessions, the students responded negatively. More importantly, when asked about a negative attitude toward school, the student's average response ($M=2.444$) was positive. Table 11 displays a more detailed view of the individual responses on the student survey.

Table 11

Frequency Distribution of Student Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree				
	N	N	N	N	N
You were happy with your work site placement.			1	2	6
You felt safe at the work site.				1	8
You received excellent counseling at your work site.				3	6
The adults at the work site were positive role models.					9
The work site provided real world experiences that are related to prior learning.				1	8
You were allowed to complete your homework assignments.				2	7
You turned in your assignment when you returned to school.				1	8
You attended tutoring sessions upon your return to school.	3	2			3
You did not exhibit a positive attitude toward school after you returned to school.	6		1		1
The counseling helped to improve your self-esteem.		1	1	4	3
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension.			1		8
You were offered UCATS on your _____ suspension.	7		1	1	

Mean responses to the parent survey are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations for Parent Survey Responses

	Mean	S. D.
Your child was happy with your child's work site placement.	4.333	1.118
Your child felt safe at the work site.	4.222	1.394
Your child received excellent counseling at the work site.	4.333	1.000
The adults at the work site were positive role models.	4.125	.991
The work site provided real world experiences that are related to prior learning.	3.667	1.118
Your child was allowed to complete homework assignments.	4.222	1.093
Your child turned in assignments when he or she returned to school.	4.444	.882
Your child attended tutoring sessions when he or she returned to school.	3.111	1.269
Your child did not exhibit a positive attitude toward school after he or she returned to school.	4.333	.707
The counseling helped to improve your child's self-esteem.	4.111	.928
The counseling made your child feel better about getting good grades.	3.778	.833
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.	4.125	.991
Your child was offered UCATS on his or her ____ suspension.	1.556	1.333

The means showed that parents generally supported the UCATS Program and believed that it provided a positive influence on their child's school life. There were some concerns shown by parents related to the opportunity to get in the UCATS Program on the first suspension. Table 13 gives a more detailed view of the individual response by parent on the parent survey.

Table 13

Frequency Distribution for Parent Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
Your child was happy with your child's work site placement.		1	1	1	6
Your child felt safe at the work site.	1		1	1	6
Your child received excellent counseling at the work site.			3		6
The adults at the work site were positive role models.			3	1	4
The work site provided real world experiences that are related to prior learning.		2	1	4	2
Your child was allowed to complete homework assignments.		1	1	2	5
Your child turned in your assignments when he or she returned to school.			2	1	6
Your child attended tutoring sessions when he or she returned to school.		4	2	1	2
Your child did exhibit a positive attitude toward school after he or she returned to school.			1	4	4
The counseling helped to improve your child's self-esteem.			3	2	4
The counseling made your child feel better about getting good grades.			4		2
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.			3	1	4
Your child was offered UCATS on his or her _____ suspension.	7	1			1

Parents did not believe that their students attended tutoring sessions when they

returned to school. Four of the nine parents disagreed with this statement. In addition, parents were undecided whether their child received counseling in the UCATS Program, and whether counseling made their child feel better about getting good grades. Parents were undecided if participating in the UCATS Program improved their child's self-esteem, if the supervisors at the work sites were good role models, and if the UCATS Program was effective. Parents agreed that their child was happy with their placement at the work site, was safe at the work site, and that the UCATS Program afforded their child an opportunity to complete missed assignments.

Teachers have a different view of the UCATS Program expressing answers that were more negative than students and parents. Table 14 gives the mean response for each of the 13 questions on the teacher survey.

Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations for Teacher Survey Responses

	N	S. D.
You are consistently informed when a student is participating in the UCATS Program.	2.343	1.188
Students consistently come by to pick up their assignments before they report to the work sites.	2.202	1.059
Students consistently turn in assignments when they return to school.	2.455	1.127
Students consistently make up missed work within days after they return to school.	2.465	1.091
Students consistently attend tutoring sessions to make up work.	2.520	1.048
Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.	3.062	.922
Students do exhibit positive attitudes toward school when they return to school from UCATS.	2.949	.935
Students consistently received additional out-of-school suspension after they returned from UCATS.	2.960	.781
Students participating in UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor attendance.	2.717	.821
Students participating in UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor grades.	2.747	.787
Students consistently receive counseling while they are participating in the UCATS Program.	2.889	.713
Students consistently receive follow up counseling when they return to school from UCATS.	2.909	.591
UCATS is an effective alternative to out-of-school suspension.	3.465	.873

The mean response for teachers on the effectiveness of the UCATS Program was 3.465 (SD=0.873). This indicates that more teachers agreed with the effectiveness of the

program than disagreed with the program, but a large number of teachers were undecided. Table 15 shows the distribution of the responses to the 13 questions. Only one question received more positive responses than negative responses and that question asked students about their UCATS experience. For all questions, the undecided and negative responses were higher in number than the number of positive responses.

Table 15

Frequency Distribution for Teacher Survey Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
You are consistently informed when a student is participating in the UCATS Program.	26	39	14	14	6
Students consistently come by to pick up their assignments before they report to the work sites.	31	29	31	4	4
Students consistently turn in assignments when they return to school.	25	25	32	13	4
Students consistently make up missed work within 2 days after they return to school.	20	35	26	14	4
Students consistently attend tutoring sessions to make up work.	20	27	32	18	1
Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.	5	19	42	27	4
Students do exhibit positive attitudes toward school when they return to school from UCATS.	7	20	46	21	4
Students consistently received additional out-of-school suspension after they returned from UCATS.	4	17	60	15	3
Students participating in UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor attendance.	8	26	52	12	1
Students participating in UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor grades.	8	22	56	13	
Students consistently receive counseling while they are participating in the UCATS Program.	3	19	66	8	3
Students consistently receive follow up counseling when they return to school from UCATS.	3	13	73	10	
UCATS is an effective alternative to out-of-school suspension.	1	11	39	37	11

Mean responses for administrators are listed in Table 16. The data showed that

administrators believed that the UCATS Program was a positive alternative to out-of-school suspension. This was evidenced by the high averages for questions that pertained to attendance and student achievement.

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations for Administrator Responses

	Mean	S. D.
Students are consistently offered UCATS on their first eligible offense.	4.714	.488
Teachers are informed when students are assigned to UCATS.	3.857	1.069
Students exhibit positive attitudes toward school after participating in UCATS.	4.571	.787
Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.	4.571	.787
Students are suspended again after participating [in] UCATS.	3.143	1.215
UCATS aided in meeting the daily average attendance.	3.833	1.472
UCATS aided in reducing the number of failures due to absences.	4.143	1.464
UCATS aided in reducing the number of students involved in the juvenile court system.	3.714	1.380
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.	4.571	.787

Table 17 displays the detailed responses of the administrators.

Table 17

Frequency Distribution for Administrator Responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N	N	N	N	N
Students are consistently offered UCATS on their first eligible offense.				2	5
Teachers are informed when students are assigned to UCATS.		1	1	3	2
Students exhibit positive attitudes toward school after participating in UCATS.			1	1	5
Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.			1	1	5
Students are suspended again after participating [in] UCATS.		3	1	2	1
UCATS aided in meeting the daily average attendance.	1			3	2
UCATS aided in reducing the number of failures due to absences.	1			2	4
UCATS aided in reducing the number of students involved in the juvenile court system.	1		1	3	2
UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.			1	1	5

The administrators disagreed as to whether students who had been through the UCATS Program received additional suspensions. This can be explained by the fact that administrators who participated in this study were from two different schools.

The participants were asked to rank alternative to suspension programs from most

effective (1) to least effective (5). The following results were obtained and placed in Table 18.

Table 18

Ranked Alternative to Suspension Programs

	Teachers	Administrators	Parents	Students
After school detention	3	3	5	4
Before school detention	5	4	4	5
In-school suspension	4	5	3	2
Saturday detention	1	2	2	3
UCATS	2	1	1	1

The administrators, parents, and students ranked the UCATS Program as the most effective. The teachers ranked Saturday detention as most effective.

Several business agencies perceived the UCATS Program to be an excellent program. One agency emphasized that it is a great program that allows the students the opportunity to redeem themselves.

The UCATS staff perception of the program is expressed in the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Research Question 3

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? The data from three stakeholder board members gave the following as anticipated strengths of the UCATS Program. The researcher also used the data from open-ended questions and interviews with students, UCATS staff, teachers, and the community business/agency partners to determine the weaknesses of program.

The anticipated strengths reported by the members of the stakeholders were that

UCATS would provide a positive social connection, positive role models, and potential mentors in the community. The program would serve the educational needs of the students, rather than allowing the student to slip away even more during the suspension. The program would also allow small group teaching within an environment, which would less likely produce peer pressure. One stakeholder reported that UCATS would provide students with a positive work experience and give them a sense of making a valued contribution to the community through their work and association with persons who value education and demonstrate the advantage of being educated. An anticipated strength was to help students make positive decisions and to give students the opportunity to make up their work and receive counseling to build self-esteem.

The teachers provided several strengths of the UCATS Program. Teachers reported that students who participated received a second chance to succeed and were shown what their options might be if they took their education for granted. Teachers also reported that participating in the program motivated the students to do better when they returned to school causing them to realize why school matters. UCATS was better than having a day off. Students were not on vacation while they were suspended and UCATS kept students off the streets. UCATS participation enhanced the work ethic of students while it provided the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities. In essence, UCATS kept the students busy and allowed them to perform work in the community. The teachers also reported that the students received attendance credit along with the opportunity to make up missed work. These opportunities provided by UCATS could keep students from dropping out of school if they missed too many days from an out-of-school suspension. Teachers listed journaling and counseling as strengths of the UCATS Program. Journaling allowed the students to reflect on their mistakes while the

counseling sessions provided the students with some hope and encouragement. Lastly, teachers reported that UCATS was constructive punishment. Teachers also responded positively to question 13 relating to UCATS as an effective alternative to a suspension program. Teachers also reported that UCATS motivated the students to do better when they transitioned back to school.

Students indicated that UCATS was helpful with attendance and gave the students a second chance to redeem themselves when they made a mistake. The students expressed that it felt good to speak about the situation that led to their suspension with the adults in the program. The students also indicated that they received good experience working in the community; one commented that they found out that real jobs are not fun and games and that you have to stay focused. The result of the survey supports the strengths listed by the students in the survey. Students stated the strengths of the assignment program as a means of learning from people, and that the work place was a good fit. When transitioning back to school, the students perceived that their attitudes were better toward school and that it was easier to resume their academic progress after attending the UCATS Program.

Parents cited the positive and encouraging adults associated with the UCATS Program who worked with the students as strengths of the program. Parents indicated that the UCATS Program made the student aware that every action has consequences and that the program allowed the student to reflect on the mistake made so that it would not be repeated. The parents reported that the work experience was meaningful for the students and that the students received good counseling. Parents pointed out that UCATS allowed students to return to school with their self-esteem because they knew that they did something positive. The students did not feel alienated from school and were given the

opportunity to make up missed work. Finally, parents reported that UCATS was more effective than sitting at home and being counted absent from school. UCATS gave students the opportunity to experience worthwhile activities for the business partners. The data from the survey in Table 13 supports statements made by the parents concerning the strengths of the UCATS Program. The parents did not agree on whether the students attended tutoring when they returned. Parents identified the strengths of the assignment process were that the students were placed in sites close to school and home and that the staff was friendly.

Parents stated having the opportunity to make up missed work when the students transitioned back to school as a strength of the program. If the student was out for 2 days, it was the same as a weekend, and the student was not alienated when he/she returned to school.

The administrators stated that UCATS provided the students with an opportunity to serve their community and the chance to reflect on their actions as strengths of the program. The administrators pointed out that UCATS kept the students off of the street and placed them in safe and structured environments. The administrators reported that participation in UCATS made the students aware that there are consequences for their behavior and UCATS gave the students a second chance. Administrators also stated that students who completed the program received an attendance credit.

The community business partners stated that the UCATS staff was one of the strengths of the program. The UCATS staff worked with the agency staff placing students in regards to ability level, sex, and age; they were organized, provided a high level of support, and had good procedures for placement and follow-up. The business partners reported strengths of the program as UCATS being easy to work with and UCATS being

viewed as a source of free labor. The business agency representative also reported that the UCATS leadership genuinely cared about the students; the program was very practical, non-threatening, and goal-oriented. The business agency representative reported that they were assigned good students to work with and that the students should not have to continue to pay for single mistakes in school over and over again. The business agency representative indicated that first-time offenders were given the chance to get back on track in school and learn from their mistakes while giving back to the community. Participation in UCATS showed students how the real world works, taught students responsibility while it held the students accountable, and provided them an opportunity to try out some careers. Other strengths stated were redemption on the part of the student, attendance credit, second chance, a time to reflect, extra help for the site, and options for the parent and student. Some students wanted to return to school; students were also able to receive information on domestic violence and dating violence.

The business reported the assignment process as a strength of the program. Each day UCATS representatives called the sites early in the morning to assign only one student at a time. These assignments gave students exposure to different types of career opportunities. The UCATS partnership with the community business agency and the individual businesses required an open dialogue related to the offenses of the students to be assigned. The business agency had the choice to accept or reject the student. UCATS provided positive experiences, and an intake counselor was always present for students at the beginning of the assignment. For convenience, students were assigned to work sites close to their homes in order to lessen the transportation burden for parents. The business indicated the strengths of the partnership were that students gave to the community, provided unity within the community, increased the community image and gave the

students a second chance and a win-win scenario.

The UCATS staff reported strengths of the program to be their cohesiveness as a team, the relationship with the business community, the staff's commitment to build upon the success of the improvement, dedicated daily counseling time for the students, career exploration for the students, and participation limited to once a semester. The staff pointed out that the coordinator addressed the needs of the secretary, counselors, and sites on a daily basis. The staff also cited as strengths the accessibility of bilingual information for the parents at the work site, assigning one student per site, consistency and adherence of student requirements, immediate response to student and site issues, and support from central office when needed. They also reported the program promoting job readiness and building the student's confidence by being in the community as strengths of the program.

The UCATS staff provided strengths for the transition back to school as accomplishment of a goal by completing the program and returning to school with their daily journal of events, and a certificate of accomplishment. UCATS counselors provided follow-up services on special cases. Students returned to school feeling positive about themselves. The UCATS staff also pointed out that when the students returned to school they had addressed issues, received counseling, and committed to learn from their mistakes.

The UCATS staff indicated that the strengths of the business partnership were the variety of available sites to insure appropriate student placement, willingness to participate by the work site, background checks on site personnel, and a relationship being established between the site personnel and the suspended student. The business partnership offered students career exploration, promoted job readiness, and helped students build confidence by being in the community.

The board of education members anticipated weaknesses of the UCATS Program. They predicted that travel time to the site would be time consuming and predicted that some students would opt out and take the suspension because they did not have transportation to travel to the job site.

The students stated that the weaknesses of the program were that they had to miss school and that they were ashamed to face the people that they upset. The students stated that when they transitioned back to school it was hard for them to catch up. The students pointed out that the weaknesses at the assigned locations were that they were not accustomed to doing so much work, they initially did not know where they were going, and the students could not work in the same location. The parents indicated a weakness of the UCATS Program was having difficulty transporting the students to and from the work site.

The teachers indicated lack of communication as a major weakness. Teachers reported that they were not informed when a student was assigned to the UCATS Program. A large number of teachers stated that they did not know about the program until they were asked to fill out the survey. Teachers expressed that the students did not always make up work, they missed classroom instruction, and some of the students were distractions in class when they returned because they bragged about their experience. Participation not likely having a lasting effect and there being a lack of feedback on how the student can be helped in the future were also mentioned as weaknesses of the program. Some teachers stated that it was not a true punishment since some students may stay at home and have fun day. Teachers indicated that the punishment should be something that the students do not like. Students do not view UCATS as a punishment because they get to stay out of school. UCATS is vacation. The weakness indicated by

the teachers is supported by the data in Table 15.

The administration conveyed as weaknesses the students not having transportation to participate in the program and a need for bilingual counselors. The board of education members also stated transportation issues as an anticipated weakness.

The business partners reported that on occasion the students came to the job site inappropriately dressed for the type of work they would be doing on a given day. The business partners also stated that they would sometimes receive phone calls late in the afternoon for placement the next day.

The UCATS staff identified challenges in staffing, the volume of students placed, a limited amount of time spent with the students, and the travel distance for the counselors as weaknesses of the program. Transportation problems and the work demands of the families were also weaknesses identified by the UCATS staff. Finally, the unavailability of sites and the time consumed securing class work from schools were also identified as weaknesses of the program. The UCATS staff stated weaknesses in the business partnership as the sites limited student participation, the different levels of commitment by the business, and poor communication on occasion. When transitioning back to school the UCATS staff also stated that the counselors did not have enough time to follow up with students returning to school, and there was no methodology in place to receive feedback from the school and UCATS after the student returns. They also cited inconsistencies with the level of support students received from the administration and school counselors when they returned to school after participating in UCATS as a weakness.

Weaknesses in the assignment process were that staff did not have direct

knowledge and experience with the suspended student and the UCATS staff cannot accommodate the parent request for an 8:00 a.m. placement.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study served as an evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program (UCATS). Students, parents, teachers, and administrators from two schools participated in the study. Accordingly, three members from the Union County Public Board of Education, business partners, and the UCATS staff also participated in the program evaluation. Three questions were used to guide the research evaluation.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does UCATS fulfill the seven objectives of the Program?

2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders, students, parents, administrators, UCATS staff, teachers, and community business/agency partners of the UCATS Program?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

Discussion

1. To what extent does the UCATS Program fulfill the seven objectives?

Objective: To provide an alternative to suspension program. The UCATS Program provided the student with an alternative to suspension program. The data also showed that this alternative was acceptable to all stakeholders.

Objective: To ensure that students are constructively occupied during their suspension. The data showed that students were engaged in performing various tasks supervised by adults at the work sites. The students filed papers, worked in day care centers, worked in the media centers, and some of the students worked in grocery stores and coffee shops where they stocked shelves and assisted customers. All of the tasks performed by the students supported the objective that the students were actively occupied when they participated in the UCATS Program.

Objective: To avoid interruption and deterioration of the student's academic process. The majority of the students who participated in the program experienced a decline in their academic performance. The results showed that the students' grades decreased from one to sixteen points. Only one student who participated in the survey maintained or improved his or her academic standing. Examination of the surveys for both parents and students revealed that students were given the opportunity to complete and submit their assignments while participating in the UCATS Program. Students and parents also reported that students did not attend tutoring sessions when they returned to school. This statement is supported by the grades earned by the students when they participated in the program. Reduction in grades contradicted the responses of the students and parents but supported the responses of the teachers. The reduction in the students' academic performances provided a discrepancy for this objective. The teachers indicated that the students did not turn in make-up work or attend tutoring sessions. This supports the data of the students' grades but does not support the objectives that students would not experience academic deterioration when they participated in the UCATS Program.

Objective: To prevent involvement in the juvenile court system. The results of the crime report from the Juvenile Justice System showed that there was an increase in crimes between 2004 and 2007. For the first 4 years, the results indicated that the number of cases referred to the juvenile system did not support the objective. The number of incidents reported from 2007 to 2008 decreased by 266 reported cases (NCDJJ, 2007). This was the only time that the reported cases supported the data. The data for the first 4 years clearly did not support the objective.

Objective: To provide individual counseling. The UCATS counselor provided

individual counseling to the students. The amount of counseling depended on the receptiveness of the student. The majority of the students (66.7%) said that they received excellent counseling from the UCATS staff. There was confusion as to whether counseling took place. The students responded that they spoke with the UCATS boss and a woman from the program. The students did not perceive the sessions as counseling although the students stated that it was good to talk about the situation which led to the suspension. The parents, however, did not agree that the student received excellent counseling. The UCATS staff reported that they spent anywhere from 10 to 60 minutes with students each day. The staff focused on helping the student to reflect on the mistakes that he or she made and guided the student to scenarios that could have had different outcomes. It is inconclusive as to whether the objective meets the criteria for this objective since there were only nine students participating in the study.

Objective: To give students real world experiences that can relate to their education. The students who participated in the UCATS Program stated that they were able to use some of the skills that they learned in some of their classes. Students revealed that they had a better understanding of the real world after their experiences at work sites. They also revealed a better appreciation for cleanliness in restaurants and day care centers and expressed the need to take more responsibility for the safety of their consumers as a result of their assignments in these two work places.

Objective: To enhance self-esteem and increase self-worth. When asked about self-esteem and self-worth, 67% of the parents agreed with the students in saying that participation in the UCATS Program helped to increase their self-esteem and self-worth. The UCATS staff indicated that the student's self-esteem was enhanced when he/she entered into the program. Participation in the UCATS Program was voluntary and the fact

that the student agreed to participate in the program indicated student buy-in. The student's willingness to commit to do something positive for him/herself and the fact that parents were willing to go through the intake process communicated to the student that he/she had some importance and value. The majority of the students in the survey (74%) indicated that counseling helped to improve self-esteem. There is no discrepancy that contradicts the objective that participation in the UCATS Program would increase self-esteem.

2. What are the perceptions of the stakeholders, students, parents, administrators, UCATS staff, teachers, and community business/agency partners of the UCATS Program? The data from the survey administered to the students showed that the students and parents related positively to the questions asked about the UCATS Program. The students and the parents also agreed that they felt safe and were happy with the placement at the job site. All of the students felt that they received excellent counseling and were in the presence of adults who were good role models. All of the students strongly disagreed that they did not exhibit a positive attitude when they returned to school. The students also agreed that UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program. These statements coincide with the results from the student being asked to rank the different types of alternative to suspension programs. The students chose UCATS as the most effective alternative to suspension program. The parents' perception of the UCATS Program was very similar to the students'. The parents perceived that UCATS provided a safe environment and that students enjoyed being there. Parents also perceived that the students received counseling and that the people at the work place were positive role models. In addition, the parents agreed that the program promoted self-esteem to the participants. When ranked for effectiveness, the parents chose UCATS as the most

effective alternative to suspension program.

The teachers' perception of the UCATS Program was more negative than the students' and the parents'. Teachers disagreed that they were informed when students participated in the UCATS Program, students came by to pick up their assignments, turned in assignments, and that students made up missed work within 2 days after returning to school. Teachers also disagreed as to whether students attended tutoring sessions. Teachers were undecided if students spoke positively about the UCATS Program, if they exhibited positive attitudes toward school when they returned to school, and if students received additional out-of-school suspensions. Teachers were also undecided about whether students received counseling or failed because of poor attendance or poor grades. The teachers did agree, however, that UCATS was an effective alternative to suspension. When asked to rank the effectiveness of UCATS among other alternative to suspension programs, UCATS was ranked second and Saturday detention was ranked first, as the most effective alternative to suspension program.

The administrators perceived the UCATS Program as a positive alternative to a suspension program. The administrators agreed that they offered students UCATS on the first eligible offense. They also agreed that UCATS aided in reducing the number of failures due to attendance and aided in reducing the number of students involved in the juvenile court system. The administrators reported that the students spoke positively about the UCATS Program and exhibited positive attitudes after they participated in the program. This statement coincides with the results of the parents and the students but conflicts with teachers. The administrators were divided on whether students received additional suspensions after they participated in the UCATS Program. An equal number

of administrators agreed and disagreed that the students received additional suspensions. The administrators stated that the UCATS Program is an effective alternative to suspension program and ranked the program number one when they were asked to rank UCATS with other alternative to suspension programs.

The community business partners perceived the UCATS Program in a positive manner. The program was referred to as good, great, and excellent by different agencies. The agencies also said that it was a good program because it offered the students who participated in it a chance to redeem themselves. The perception of the program is also stated in the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

3. *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?* The first anticipated strength reported by the members of the board of education was to provide a positive social connection to positive role models and potential mentors in the community. The students and parents agreed that the students were in contact with positive role models at the job site.

Another anticipated strength of the program was to serve the educational needs of the student rather than allowing the student to slip away even more during the suspension. Avoiding interruption and deterioration in the student's academic process was one of the original objectives of the program. The results of the study showed that that student's academic standing decreased after he/she participated in the UCATS Program. The statements of the parents, teachers, and students supported the decrease in academic standing.

The next anticipated strength was that the program would also allow small group teaching within an environment, which would less likely produce peer pressure. The UCATS staff assigned only one student to a job site. There is no evidence that peer

pressure was reduced as a result of the UCATS Program.

One board member stated that UCATS would provide students with a positive work experience and give them a sense of making a valued contribution to the community through their work, and association with persons who value education and demonstrate the advantage of being educated. One of the students commented that if you stay in school and work hard you will not have to work in an average place. Students and parents stated that students had a good experience working in the community.

An anticipated strength was to help students to make positive decisions and give students an opportunity to make up their work and receive counseling to build self-esteem. Students indicated participating in the UCATS Program gave them an opportunity to talk about the situation with an adult, and they felt good as a result of these conversations. The parents, teachers, business agency representatives, and the UCATS staff indicated that the students received counseling at the work site. The students pointed out that the counseling helped them to return to school with a better attitude.

The students, parents, teachers, administrators, UCATS staff, and business agencies all agreed that the receipt of attendance credit if they were able to complete the UCATS Program was a strength of the program. Receipt of this credit decreased the chances that a student would fail because of attendance. Attendance credit was not one of the original objectives of the UCATS Program. Attendance credit was later added to replace the interruption and deterioration of student academic process which was removed from the program objectives.

Other strengths were UCATS provided the students with a second chance and provided counseling in a safe environment. The UCATS Program also promoted a positive community relationship. Students were placed in locations that were in close

proximity to their homes and age-appropriate placements were assigned. Relationships were established between the site personnel and the suspended student.

Anticipated weaknesses of the program were transportation problems and student and parents may opt out of participating in the program and serve the suspension. The parents and UCATS staff also listed transportation as a weakness of the program. The parents stated that they had difficulty transporting the students to and from the work sites. The UCATS staff also pointed this out as a weakness although every effort was made to place the students close to their homes.

Other weaknesses of the program were communication issues on all levels, staffing problems, traveling time to and from the job sites, different levels of commitment, no methodology in place to provide feedback, and the fact that students missed school.

Conclusion

Union County Public Schools developed an alternative to suspension program that promoted a positive relationship between the school and the participating community agency. The program required parental involvement from the point students qualified for participation in the program to the intake process. The partnership placed suspended students in locations throughout the county where they were exposed to various potential career pathways. Students received one-on-one counseling from one of the UCATS staff. In addition, students who successfully completed the program received attendance credit. The parents did not have to worry about the child sitting at home performing non-productive tasks.

Suspended students were assigned to locations throughout the county where they were exposed to various potential career pathways with positive role models. The

students were required to perform the same tasks as the employees, and tasks that the community/business agencies did not have the manpower to accomplish. Students who participated in the UCATS Program were able to gain first-hand knowledge of how the real world works. The students received counseling from one the UCATS staff on a daily basis. The counselor assisted the students in analyzing the action that led to the suspension and formulated scenarios of how the situation could have been handled differently. The students also kept a journal of the activities that they performed while they participated in the program.

Students who successfully completed the program received attendance credit. The students were able to pick up where they left off because they were allowed to work on homework assignments when they were at the work site. The students did not have to jeopardize their academic career as a result of a consequence for exercising a bad decision that led to the suspension.

The community business/agency provided the students with a safe haven during the instruction day and received free labor from the students. The business/agency also received free publicity in the community and formed a positive partnership with the school system.

Recommendations

1. The UCATS staff should schedule at least two follow-up meetings with students who participated in the program after they have successfully completed the program.

2. The UCATS staff needs to establish a relationship with the Juvenile Justice Department to set up workshops for parents and students who participated in the program.

3. The UCATS staff needs to inform all of the stakeholders about the program.

4. The school administrators need to notify teachers when students are placed in the program.

Limitations

This research was limited by the lack of participation of the parents, students, and business agencies. Two schools participating in the program also limited the study. The number of teachers who participated in the study gave some validity related to their perceptions of the UCATS Program. For students, parents, and business partners, the number of participants for each of these groups presented significant limitations to the study. Each of these groups was too small to draw any conclusion related to the success of the UCATS Program. Although this study did provide some valuable insight for the district, it should not be viewed as a definitive solution for behaviors that result in suspension from school.

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Appendix A

Categories for Student Qualification to UCATS Program

Union County Alternative to Suspension

Categories for Student Qualification

ELIGIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy #3	Fighting, Threatening or Attempting to Cause Physical Harm
Policy #8	Possession of a Weapon
Policy #11	Theft or Vandalism of Property
Policy #13	Possession of Nuisance Items
Policy #14	Use of Insulting, Abusive, Profane Words toward Employees
Policy #15	Use of Insulting, Abusive, Profane Words toward Students
Policy #16	Possession or use of Tobacco Products
Policy #20	Chronic Student Disruptive Behavior

Students in who violate individual school rules are eligible for consideration for UCATS.

INELIGIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy #1	Physical Violence toward School Employee
Policy #2	Threat toward School Employee
Policy #4	Assault, Attack, or Attempt to Harm by two or more Students
Policy #5	Extortion or Blackmail under threat of Physical Harm
Policy #7	Causing False Alarm, Bomb Threat or Act of Terrorism
Policy #8	Use of A Weapon
Policy #9	Bringing or use of a Firearm
Policy # 10	Arson of School Property
Policy # 12	Possessing m Using, Distributing Illegal Drugs

Policy # 19 Sexual Offense or Assault

POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION FOR ELIGIBILITY

Policy # 6 Behavior that Incites a Riot

Policy #17 Indecent Exposure of Flagrant Sexual Activity

Policy # 18 Sexual Harassment

For infractions in the Possible Consideration for Eligibility category, the Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Director of Support Services may be consulted, if necessary during f the determination of the category. (UCPS, 2006)

Appendix B

Consent to Conduct Program Evaluation

February 16, 2009

Dr. Ed Davis, Superintendent
 Union County Public Schools
 700 North Main Street, Suite 500
 Monroe, North Carolina 28112

Dear Dr. Davis,

As you know, I am currently a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina. I am working under the advisement of Dr. David Shellman. My research is entitled is 'Evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension Program. The purpose of the research is to identify the needs that existed at the beginning of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives are met, identify the different perceptions of the UCATS program and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

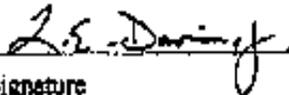
I am seeking permission to survey and interview students at two high schools in Union County who participated in the UCATS program, survey their parents, school personnel, Board Members, the UCATS Staff, and Business Agencies who participated to get their perceptions of the UCATS program. I am also seeking and permission to have access to student academic, attendance, discipline information in addition to accountability information.

The UCATS program is a second chance for students suspended from school. It is my intent to provide information to verifying that the UCATS program is meeting the objectives of the program and that the program is perceived as being beneficial. I am seeking your consent, as written documentation is needed before I can begin the study. Your signature at the bottom of this letter would provide the documentation for me to being my study. I appreciate all of the support that you having given me during my professional and educational endeavors.

Sincerely,

Joyce A. Dunlap

 Joyce A. Dunlap has permission to conduct research on the Evaluation of the UCATS program in the Union County Public Schools system.


 Signature

2-20-09
 Date

Appendix C

Student/Teacher/Administrator/Business/Parent Consent Forms

Student Permission Form

My name is Joyce Ann Dunlap in addition to my responsibilities as an assistant principal at Weddington High School; I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University. Under the advisement of my Chairperson, Dr. David Shellman, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives are met and to identify the different perceptions of the UCATS Program.

Dr. Davis, Superintendent of Union County Public School [,] has granted me permission to conduct the research at your child's school. I understand that your child participated in the UCATS Program and input from your child concerning his/her experiences while he/she participated in the program would be beneficial to the program. There are no foreseeable dangers or risks for participating in the study.

I will need your consent for your child to complete the survey and for me to talk to me concerning his/her experience at the UCATS. The interview will take place at your child's school at a time and place that is suitable for the building administrator. Copies of the interview questions are enclosed. The information gathered will be for the evaluations of the program.

The survey and the interview will be confidential and at no time will your child's name be revealed. Information will be coded and destroyed. Participation in the program is voluntary and our child may choose to stop at any time. Your child will not be treated any differently if they are not allowed to participate, or if they decide to stop once, the interview has begun.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at 704-708-5530.

My Child _____

Student Signature _____

Has permission to participate by completing the survey and the interview Yes ___ No ___

The interview may be audio taped. Yes _____ No _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Researchers Signature _____ Date _____

Business Partner/Agency Employee Consent Form

My name is Joyce Ann Dunlap in addition to my responsibilities as an assistant principal at Weddington High School; I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University. Under the advisement of my Chairperson, Dr. David Shellman, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives are met, and to identify the different perceptions of UCATS.

Dr. Davis, Superintendent of Union County Public School [,] has granted me permission to conduct the research. I understand that you allowed students to perform their community a service at your establishment. Your feedback concerning UCATS the program would be beneficial to the research. There are no foreseeable dangers or risks for participating in the study.

The interview will be confidential and at no time will your name be revealed. Information will be coded and destroyed. Participation in the program is voluntary and you may choose to stop at any time. You will not be treated differently if you choose not to participate in the study.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at 704-708-5530.

_____ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH.

_____ I AGREE TO BE AUDIO TAPPED

Participant's Name (Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Union County Public Schools Employee Consent Form

My name is Joyce Ann Dunlap in addition to my responsibilities as an assistant principal at Weddington High School; I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University. Under the advisement of my Chairperson, Dr. David Shellman, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives are met, and to identify the different perceptions of UCATS.

Dr. Davis, Superintendent of Union County Public School [,] has granted me permission to conduct the research in your school. Your perception of the UCATS Program would be beneficial. There are no foreseeable dangers or risks for participating in the study by completing the survey.

The survey will be confidential and at no time will your name be revealed. Information will be coded and destroyed. Participation in the program is voluntary and you may choose to stop at any time. You will not be treated differently if you choose not to participate in the study.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at 704-708-5530.

_____ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH.

Participant's Name (Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Parental Consent Form

My name is Joyce Ann Dunlap in addition to my responsibilities as an assistant principal at Weddington High School; I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University. Under the advisement of my Chairperson, Dr. David Shellman, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, determine the extent to which the objectives are met, and to identify the different perceptions of UCATS.

Dr. Davis, Superintendent of Union County Public School [,] has granted me permission to conduct the research in your school. I understand that your child participated in the UCATS Program and your feedback concerning your child's experiences in the program would be beneficial to the research. There are no foreseeable dangers or risks for participating in the study.

The survey will be confidential and at no time will your name be revealed. Information will be coded and destroyed. Participation in the program is voluntary and you may choose to stop at any time. Your child will not be affected in any way if you choose not to participate.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at 704-708-5530.

_____ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH.

Participant's Name (Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix D
Stakeholder Survey

Stakeholders Survey Instrument

Developed by Joyce Dunlap

I am interested in your input concerning the UCATS Program as it was implemented in 2004. Information is needed on the conditions that existed before the program was implemented. Please use the scale below to rate the following items. Thank you for your cooperation.

1= Strongly Disagree	2= Disagree	3= Undecided	4= Agree	5= Strongly Agree
----------------------	-------------	--------------	----------	-------------------

1. Over 4500 students in Union County Public Schools received out of school suspension in the 2002-2003 school year.	1	2	3	4	5
2 Students consistently fail to make up work when they are suspended.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students consistently failed due to excessive absences when they are suspended.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Suspended students have low self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
5. An alternative to out of school suspension is needed.	1	2	3	4	5

6. What are some anticipated strengths and weakness of the program ?

7. Why was this particular program chosen?

Demographic information

8. Gender

_____ Male _____ Female

9. Ethnicity

_____ African American

_____ Asian American

_____ Caucasian

_____ Hispanic

Appendix E

Student Survey Instrument/Interview Questions

Student Survey Instrument

Union County Alternative to Suspension Developed by Joyce Dunlap

You participated in the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions on the survey. Please circle your answer choice. Thank you for your cooperation.

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Undecided 4 =Agree 5= Strongly Agree
--

1. You were happy with your work site placement.	1 2 3 4 5
2. You felt safe at the work site.	1 2 3 4 5
3. You received excellent counseling at the work site.	1 2 3 4 5
4. The adults at the work site were positive role models.	1 2 3 4 5
5. The work site provided real world experiences that are related to prior learning,	1 2 3 4 5
6. You were allowed to complete homework assignments.	1 2 3 4 5
7. You turned in your assignments when you returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
8. You attended tutoring sessions upon your returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
9. You did not exhibit a positive attitude toward school after you returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
10. The counseling helped to improve your self-esteem.	1 2 3 4 5
11. UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.	1 2 3 4 5
12. You were offered UCATS on your _____ suspension.	1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions.

13. What work site were you assigned?

14. What tasks (job) did you perform?

15. What is a strengths and weakness of the placement process?

16. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the transition back to school?

17. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

18. Rank from 1-5 the most effective alternative to suspension (1-most effective 5 least effective)

_____After school detention

_____Before School detention

_____In-School Suspension

_____Saturday Detention (School)

_____UCATS

Demographic Information

19. Grade level 9 10 11 12

20. Ethnic Background

_____African American (Black)

_____American Indian

_____Asian

_____Caucasian (White)

_____Hispanic

_____Multiracial

_____Other

21. Gender

_____Male

_____Female

Student Interview Questions

Developed by Joyce Dunlap

1. How many times have you participated in the UCATS Program?
2. Where did you work?
3. What tasks (job) did you perform?
4. Did you complete the program? Why not?
5. Did you receive counseling while you participated in the program? By whom?
When you returned to school?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment process?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the transition back to school?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?
9. List the real world experience that relate to learning.
10. State any additional comments.

Appendix F
Parent Survey Instrument

Parent Survey Instrument

Union County Alternative to Suspension
Developed by Joyce Dunlap

Your child participated in the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions on the survey. Please circle your answer choice. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Undecided 4 =Agree 5= Strongly Agree
--

1. Your child was happy with your child's work site placement.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Your child felt safe at the work site.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Your child received excellent counseling at the work site.	1 2 3 4 5
4. The adults at the work site were positive role models.	1 2 3 4 5
5. The work site provided experienced that related to the students education.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Your child was allowed to complete homework assignments.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Your child turned in your assignments when he or she returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Your child attended tutoring sessions when he or she returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Your child did exhibited a positive attitude toward school after he or she returned to school.	1 2 3 4 5
10. The counseling helped to improve your child's self-esteem.	1 2 3 4 5
11. The counseling made your child feel better about getting good grades.	1 2 3 4 5
12. UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Your child was offered UCATS for his or her _____ suspension.	1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions.

14. What is a strength and weaknesses of the assignment process?

15. What is a strength and weakness of the transition back to school?

16. What are the strengths and weakness of the UCATS Program?

17. What do students need when they are suspended from school?

18. Rank from 1-5 the most effective alternative to suspension (1-most effective 5 least effective)

_____After school detention

_____Before School detention

_____In-School Suspension

_____Saturday Detention (School)

_____UCATS

Demographic Information

19. Your Child's Grade level 9 10 11 12

20. Ethnic Background of your child

_____African American (Black)

_____American Indian

_____Asian

_____Caucasian (White)

_____Hispanic

_____Multiracial

_____Other

21. Gender of your child

_____Male

_____Female

Appendix G
Teacher Survey Instrument

Teacher Survey Instrument

Union County Alternative to Suspension
Developed by Joyce Dunlap

I am interested in your perception of the Union County Alternative to Suspension (UCATS) Program. Please circle your answer choice. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Undecided 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

1. You are consistently informed when a student is participating in the UCATS Program.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Students consistently come by to pick up their assignments before they report to the job sites.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Students consistently turn in assignments when they return to school.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Students consistently make up missed work within two days after they return to school.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Students consistently attend tutoring sessions to make up work.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Students do exhibit a positive attitude toward school when they return from UCATS.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Students consistently receive additional out of school suspension after they return from UCATS.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Students participating in the UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor attendance.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Students participating in UCATS consistently fail classes due to poor grades.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Students consistently receive counseling while they are participating in the UCATS Program.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Students consistently receive follow up counseling when they return from UCATS.	1 2 3 4 5
13. UCATS is an effective alternative to out of school suspension.	1 2 3 4 5

14. What are strengths and weaknesses of the transition back to school?

15. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?

16. Rank From 1-5 the most effective alternative to out of school suspension
(1-most effective-least effective)

_____ After School Detention

_____ Before School Detention

_____ In School Suspension

_____ Saturday Detention (School)

_____ UCATS

Demographic Information

17. Ethnic Group

_____ African American

_____ Asian American

_____ Caucasian

_____ Hispanic

_____ Native America

_____ Multiracial

_____ Other

18. Gender

_____ Male

_____ Female

19. Years of Experience

_____ 1-5;

_____ 6-10

_____ 11-15;

_____ 16-20

_____ 21+

Appendix H
Administrator Survey Instrument

Administrator Survey Instrument

Union County Alternative to Suspension
Developed by Joyce Dunlap

I am interested in your input concerning the UCATS Program. Please use the scale below to rate the following items. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree 3= Undecided 4=Agree 5= Strongly Agree
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1. Students consistently are offered UCATS on their first eligible offense.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers consistently are informed when students are assigned to UCATS.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Students exhibit positive attitudes toward school after participating in UCATS.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Students speak positively about their UCATS experience.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Students are suspended again after participating UCATS	1 2 3 4 5
6. UCATS aided in meeting the daily average attendance.	1 2 3 4 5
7. UCATS aided in reducing the number of failures due to absences.	1 2 3 4 5
8. UCATS aided in reducing the number of students involved in the juvenile court system.	1 2 3 4 5
9. UCATS is an effective alternative to suspension program	1 2 3 4 5

10. List the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program.

11. Rank from 1-5 the most effective alternative to suspension (1-most effective 5 least effective)

_____After school detention

_____Before School detention

_____In-School Suspension

_____Saturday Detention (School)

_____UCATS

Demographic Information

12. Years of Experience

_____1-5; _____6-10 _____11-15 _____16-20 _____21+

13. Administrative Position

 Principal Assistant Principal Administrative Assistant

14. Gender

 Male Female

15. Ethnicity

 African American Asian American Caucasian Hispanic

Appendix I

UCATS Counselors/Directors Survey/Interview Questions

UCATS Counselors/Coordinator

Questionnaire/Interview questions
Developed by Joyce Dunlap

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment process?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the business partnership?
3. How many students do you serve on a daily basis?
4. How many work sites do you visit on a daily basis?
5. How are businesses chosen to participate in the UCATS Program?
6. How are students assigned to the various work sites?
7. How many students, on the average, do you have consultations with on a daily basis?
8. How much time do you spend with each student ?
9. Describe the strategies utilized to enhance student self-esteem and self-worth. Is it research based?
10. What are the strengths and weakness of the assignment process?
11. What are the strengths and weakness of the business partnership?
12. What are the strengths and weakness of the transition back to school?
13. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?
14. How many students received offers for competitive employment from the community service site?
15. How do you address the safety issue of students working with the individuals in the job site?
16. Do you have any comments or concerns?

Appendix J

Agency/Business Partnership Survey/Interview Questions

Agency/Business Partnership

Survey/Interview Questions
Developed by Joyce Dunlap

1. How long have you participated in the UCATS Program?
2. How many students do you allow at your facility at a time?
3. How are students assigned tasks?
4. What types of tasks do the students perform?
5. How many students have you offered competitive employment?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment process?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the business partnership?
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UCATS Program?
9. Do you have any comments or concerns?